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The Druze between Palestine and Israel 1947–49

Laila Parsons

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The Druze between Palestine and Israel 1947–49

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Preface

The 1947–49 Arab–Israeli war is one of the most important and formative events in the history of the modern Middle East. The war has been the subject of much recent controversy, specifically between those historians now labelled 'traditionalists', and those known as 'revisionists' or 'new historians'. The new historians have sought to dismantle the myths surrounding the birth of the state of Israel. One such traditionalist myth is that the Arab–Israeli conflict is and always has been a straightforward bipolar affair. Recent scholarship has shown, however, that Israel was fully aware of divisions that existed on the Arab side and that she exploited these divisions to serve her own political and military objectives. Examples of this are Israel's collusion with King 'Abdallah of Jordan and her support for the Maronites in Lebanon. This book is an in-depth study of another partnership between Jews and Arabs. By showing that a political and military alliance existed between the Palestinian Druze and the Jews during the 1947–49 Arab–Israeli war, this work throws more weight behind the new historians' rejection of the traditionalist picture of a solitary Israel faced by a monolithic and implacably hostile Arab camp.

The main body of the book is devoted to describing and analysing this alliance during the period from November 1947 to the summer of 1949; that is, from the outbreak of the civil war between Jews and Palestinians in the wake of the UN endorsement of the Partition Plan, through the inter-state Arab–Israeli war, to the conclusion of the armistice agreements between Israel and the neighbouring Arab States. The Introduction looks briefly at Druze history and culture, and Chapter 1 examines the first, tentative links formed between the Druze and the Jews in the period of the British Mandate in Palestine. Apart from the Introduction and parts of Chapter 1 the book focuses on the Palestinian Druze, referring to the Druze in Lebanon and Syria only when doing so casts light on the Palestinian Druze–Jewish relationship.

This work is based primarily on documentary material drawn from the Israeli archives, namely, the Israel State Archive, the Central Zionist Archive, the Hagana Archive, the Israel Defence Force Archive, and

the Abba Hushi Archive. Memoirs written by the characters involved in the events are also used.

For the Introduction I have relied almost entirely on secondary sources as there has been much work done on earlier phases of Druze history, and on Druze religion and society. For Chapter 1, which is devoted to Druze–Jewish relations during the British Mandate in Palestine, I have used a combination of secondary and primary sources. Some important work has already been done on this period, and I did not wish to go over the same ground again.

Although the Israel Defence Force Archive does contain some contemporaneous Arabic materials pertaining to the Druze (namely, documents and letters captured by the Israelis during the war), and although some Arabic documents may be found amongst the recently declassified papers of the Ministry of Minority Affairs, the bulk of my sources are Israeli. Therefore, the story this book tells necessarily reflects the Israeli perspective on the war and on the role of the Druze in it. The restrictions on access to Arab state archives makes this inevitable. The Druze Archive in Haifa, although useful for background material, provided very few documents from the period in question. To the extent that the writing of history is a dialogue between the historian and her sources, the reader must bear this lack of balance in mind when reading the book.

The reader must also be aware that portions of the historical narrative of the book are based on material from Israeli intelligence reports that are themselves based on information given by Druze informers. Intelligence reports can sometimes be unreliable as sources of factual information because informers tend to present information in a way that reflects what they think the recipient wants to hear. This is partly due to the fact that informers are most often paid for the information they give. Where I have doubts about the reliability of a specific piece of factual information I have said so.

Some of the memoirs of participants in the events described in this book have been written only fairly recently. The reader should bear in mind that these recently written memoirs were composed in full view of the present pro-State position of most Druze in Israel. It is perhaps inescapable that, in recounting a 40-year-old story, a participant's memory may be coloured by all that has happened since, something which, of course, should have no bearing on the past.

I had specific problems of access to material in the Israel Defence Archive. For security reasons I was not allowed to photocopy any documents there, so I was forced to copy most of them out by hand. Nor was I allowed to choose specific documents to examine, but instead was only given material that had been chosen for me by the archivist. I should say that in every other archive in Israel I was under no restrictions of this kind.

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I would also like to thank my mother, Sheila Parsons, and my late father, Anthony Parsons, for being such intellectually stimulating parents, my sister Emma Parsons for being such a good friend, my brother-in-law David Lee, my niece and nephew Rosie and Patrick Lee, my sister-in-law Anne Parsons, my niece and nephew Simon and Rebecca Parsons, my parents-in-law Mary and Joe Wisnovsky, my brother-in-law Peter Wisnovsky and my late brothers Simon and Rupert Parsons. Many thanks also to my friends Bella Bird, Carl Pearson, Michelle Murphy, Matt Price, Michael Fitzhenry, Meg Massie, Sandi Milburn, Carne Ross, Ayman el-Dessouky, Bill Granara, Stephanie Thomas, Michel Chaouli, Marie Deer, Ian Crystal and above all Harry Bone. A special mention should go to my son Simon who was born three weeks before I started work on this project and who has been so good-natured and co-operative about sharing me with it. Finally I would like to thank my husband Rob Wisnovsky, my best friend, my best critic and my best supporter. This book is dedicated to him with so much love.

List of Abbreviations

AHA	Abba Hushi Archive
ALA	Arab Liberation Army
CAP	Custodian of Abandoned Property
CZA	Central Zionist Archives
DA	Druze Archives
FM	Foreign Ministry
HA	Hagana Archive
IDF	Israel Defence Force
IDFA	Israel Defence Force Archive
ISA	Israel State Archives
MAM	Minority Affairs Ministry

Glossary of Names and Terms

Abu Rukn, Hasan – Early Druze supporter of the pro-Zionist position. Part of ‘Abdallah Khayr’s group. Killed by Muslim rebels in 1938 during reprisal attacks on Druze.

Abu Rukn, Labib – Druze from ‘Isfiya. One of the most important and influential pro-Jewish Druze activists.

Abu Snan – Mixed Muslim/Druze/Christian village in the western Galilee.

Arab Liberation Army – Arab volunteer army that entered Palestine in January 1948 before the invasion of the armies of the Arab States in May 1948. This army included a Druze battalion commanded by Shakib Wahab.

Arslan – Prominent Lebanese Druze family with connections to the Arab Nationalist movement. Shakib and ‘Adil Arslan were active in the Syrian nationalist Istiqlal party.

al-Atrash – The most prominent Druze family of Jabal Druze in Syria. Sultan al-Atrash was the head of this family during the Mandatory period and during the 1947–49 Arab–Israeli war, and was the focus of much Zionist interest.

Aurbah, Haim – Intelligence officer attached to the Seventh Brigade. Involved in forming links with Druze. On bad terms with Mordecai Shakhevitch.

al-‘Aysami, Yusuf – Syrian Druze active in cultivating links with Jews during the Mandatory period. Claimed to represent Sultan al-Atrash. Main Druze negotiator during the mid-1930s discussions about transferring the Palestinian Druze to Jabal Druze.

Ben Tzvi, Itzhak – Prominent Arabist in the Jewish Agency. Involved in early contacts with the Druze community. Later became second President of Israel.

Buqay‘a – Druze village in northern Galilee with a small indigenous Jewish population. Known in Hebrew as Peki’in.

Daliyat al-Karmal – Druze village on Mount Carmel outside Haifa.

Danin, Ezra – Senior intelligence officer in Shai during the Mandate. Senior Advisor on Arab Affairs to the Foreign Ministry, 1948–49.

Dekel – Name of the military operation launched in mid-July 1948 whose objective was the capture of Nazareth. This operation included the faked battle between the Druze and the IDF at Shafa'amr.

Dunkelman, Ben – Commander of the Seventh Brigade of the IDF during its attack on Shafa'amr in July 1948. Involved in the plan to fake the battle between the Druze of Shafa'amr and the brigade.

Epstein, Eliahu – Prominent Arabist in the Jewish Agency. Involved in the negotiations over the transfer of Palestinian Druze to Jabal Druze during the mid-1930s.

al-Hakim – The sixth Fatimid Caliph in Egypt. Druzism as a religious movement originates in the claims, made by leading members of the Fatimid religious establishment, of al-Hakim's divinity.

Hawran – Province in south-west Syria which now does not include Jabal Druze, although historically the term has been used to cover that area.

Hiram – Name of the final military operation launched by the IDF in the Galilee during the last three days of October 1948. The operation achieved its objective, namely, clearing the Galilee of Arab forces. This operation included the battle between the IDF Druze unit and the Druze villagers of Yanuh and Jath.

Histadrut – Jewish Labour Federation.

Hushi, Abba – Secretary of the Haifa branch of the Histadrut. Active in promoting good relations with the Druze community.

'Isfiya – Druze village on Mount Carmel outside Haifa. Home of the pro-Jewish Abu Rukn family.

Jabal Druze – Druze area in south-west Syria. Home of the al-Atrash family.

Joint Bureau for Arab Affairs – Established in 1930 by the Jewish Agency to promote relations between the Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine. Itzhak Ben Tzvi, who became involved in Jewish–Druze relations, was co-chairman of the bureau.

Juhhal – Arabic term meaning 'the ignorant ones' or 'the uninitiated ones'. Refers to the majority of ordinary Druze not allowed access to the Druze scriptures.

Julis – Druze village in the Western Galilee. Home of the Tarif family.

al-Junbalat – The most politically prominent Druze family in Lebanon. Interestingly, the Junbalats are said to have converted to Druzism in the nineteenth century, having been of Sunni Kurdish origin.

Khalwa – Druze place of worship or meeting-house, found in every Druze community. The Druze time of worship is every Thursday evening.

al-Khatib, Shaykh Nimr – Leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. Member of Haifa Arab National Committee during 1947–49 war. Leading critic of Druze neutrality.

Khanayfis, Salih – Prominent Druze activist from Shafa'amr. One of the most important links between the Jews and the Druze. Father killed in 1938 by Muslim rebels during a reprisal attack on Shafa'amr. Close friends with Mordecai Shakhevitch.

Khayr, 'Abdallah – Prominent Druze from the village of Abu Snan. Established the Druze Union Society in the 1930s. Involved in pro-Jewish activities.

Makhnes, Gad – Director General of the Israeli Minority Affairs Ministry, 1948–49.

Majd al-Shams – Largest Druze town on Mount Hermon.

Ma'n – Druze family that ruled in Lebanon during the first two centuries of Ottoman control. Fakhr al-Din II was the most celebrated member of the Ma'nid family, occupying a prominent place in Druze historical memory.

Mount Hermon – Known in Arabic as Jabal al-Shaykh. Situated on the borders between Lebanon, Syria and Israel. Eastern slopes of Mount Hermon inhabited by Druze.

al-Mu'addi – Prominent Druze family from the village of Yarka. Jabr Dahish al-Mu'addi and Marzuq al-Mu'addi, although rivals, were members of the same family and both involved in pro-Jewish activities.

Muwahhidun – An Arabic term meaning 'unitarians' or 'those who profess God's unity', that the Druze often use to describe themselves.

Nabi Shu'ayb – Druze prophet generally identified with the Old Testament figure Jethro, Priest of the Medianites. His shrine in Hittin in the eastern Galilee is the site of an annual Druze pilgrimage.

Palmon, Yehoshua – Leading intelligence officer in Shai during the Mandate, and later in the Israeli secret service. Involved in establishing links with the Druze.

Qabalan, Isma'il – Officer in the Druze Battalion of the Arab Liberation Army. Later defected to the IDF. Remained in Israel after the war.

al-Qawuqji, Fawzi – Commander of the Arab Liberation Army.

al-Rama – Large village in central Galilee with a small Druze population. Majority is Greek Orthodox, with a small Sunni community as well.

Ramat Yohanan – Jewish settlement near Haifa. Site of the battle between the Hagana and the Druze Battalion in April 1948.

Sasson, Elias – Prominent Arabist in the Jewish Agency. Originally from Syria, maintained links with the Syrian nationalist movement during the Mandate. Director of the Middle East Affairs Department of the Foreign Ministry from 1948–50.

Shafa'amr – Mixed Druze/Christian/Muslim town situated near the main Haifa–Nazareth road. Scene of the faked battle between the Hagana and the Druze in July 1948.

Shai – Acronym for Sherut Yedi'ot (Information Service), the pre-state intelligence body.

Shakhevitch, Mordecai – Intelligence officer in Shai during the Mandate and later in the Israeli secret service. Had many contacts in the Druze community and was particularly close to Salih Khanayfis.

Sharett, Moshe (Shertok) – Director of the Jewish Agency's Political Department during the Mandate. First Foreign Minister of Israel.

Shaykh al-'Aql – The title of the religious leader of a particular Druze area. Palestine has one Shaykh al-'Aql. During the 1947–49 Arab–Israeli war the Shaykh al-'Aql was Amin Tarif from the village of Julis.

Shiloah, Reuven (Zaslani) – Hagana Intelligence officer during the Mandate. Liaison officer between the Foreign Ministry and the defence establishment during the 1947–49 Arab–Israeli war.

Shim'oni, Ya'cov – Prominent Arabist in the Jewish Agency. Deputy Director of the Middle East Affairs Department of the Foreign Ministry, 1948–49.

Shitrit, Bechor Shalom – Israeli Minister of Minority Affairs and Police, 1948–49. Only Sephardic Jew in the first Israeli cabinet.

Sulha – An Arabic term meaning 'reconciliation'.

Tanasukh – An Arabic term meaning 'reincarnation'. *Tanasukh* is one of the most un-Islamic of Druze beliefs.

Taqiya – An Arabic term meaning 'prudence' or 'caution', often associated with Shi'ite Islam. In Shi'ite Islam *taqiya* came to have the sense of hiding one's true belief in a time of crisis or persecution;

hence the typical English translation 'dissimulation'. As a tenet it is also associated with Druzism and 'Alawism.

Tarif – Leading Druze family in Palestine. The Shaykh al-'Aql (religious leader) of the Palestinian Druze has traditionally been drawn from this family. Their home is in the Druze village of Julis in the Galilee.

Tarif, Salman – Politically active member of the Tarif family and brother of Amin Tarif, the Shaykh al-'Aql during the 1947–49 Arab–Israeli war. Involved in pro-Jewish activities.

Tawhid – An Arabic theological term meaning to profess God's 'oneness' or 'unity'. In Sunni Islam *tawhid* can be strictly understood as implying God's 'uniqueness', that is, that there is no other god but God. In Druzism *tawhid* also carries a theological sense of God's simplicity, as opposed to multiplicity.

'Uqqal – Arabic term meaning 'the wise ones' or 'the initiated ones'. The *'uqqal* are specially trained in Druze theology and are the only Druze allowed access to the Druze scriptures. They are the religious leaders of the Druze. Interestingly, women can reach this status and are referred to as *'aqilat*.

Wahab, Shakib – Commander of the Druze battalion in the Arab Liberation Army.

Yanuh – Druze village in the upper Galilee. Distinguished by its resistance to IDF occupation during the final Israeli conquest of the Galilee.

Yarka – Large Druze village in the western Galilee. Along with Abu Snan and Julis, a focus of pro-Jewish activity.

Yishuv – The pre-State Jewish community in Palestine.

Yitah, Moshe – Head of the Haifa branch of the Minority Affairs Ministry, 1948–49.

Zayd, Geura – Jewish intelligence officer during the 1947–49 war. Reported to Palmon. Involved in forming links with the Druze community.

Introduction: Some Background on the Druze

The Druze are a religious sect comprising about one million people. Approximately 390 000 live in the Lebanon, 400 000 in Syria, 20 000 in Jordan and 75 000 in Israel and the Golan Heights, with the remainder scattered across the world.[1] They live mainly in mountainous regions and have preserved, since their beginnings in the eleventh century, a cultural and political identity distinct from their Muslim and Christian neighbours.

Druzism as a political and religious movement has its origins in Isma'ilism. The Isma'ilis were themselves an offshoot of Shi'ism who differed from the mainstream Shi'ite movement over the question of who was the rightful Imam, or leader of the community. During the period of Fatimid rule in Egypt, Isma'ilism was the official religion of the dynasty and the period saw the spread of the Isma'ili *da'wa* (mission) throughout the Fatimid kingdom and beyond. It was during the reign of the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, between 996 and 1021, that Druzism first evolved. Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim felt bound to carry on the proselytizing legacy of his predecessors; this he did with zeal until the last part of his reign when certain prominent figures active in the *da'wa* began to believe in the divinity of al-Hakim himself. The official proclamation of al-Hakim's divinity in 1017 is seen by the Druze as marking the first year of the Druze faith.[2]

The new religion distinguished itself from mainstream Isma'ilism by stressing the essential and overriding importance of the doctrine of *tawhid* (Unitarianism). The followers of the new religion called themselves the true *muwahhidun* (Unitarians) and their claim was that al-Hakim 'represented the locus (*maqam*) of the Deity's manifestation

which completed the cycles of the unitarian message'.[3] In spite of this break from the established Fatimid faith Druzism still bore a great number of similarities to Isma'ilism, particularly in its adherence to certain Neoplatonic theories about the creation of the world.

Al-Hakim was instrumental in propagating the Druze *da'wa* along with his supporters, the most prominent of whom was Hamza ibn 'Ali, who is credited with having written much of the Druze canon. In 1021 al-Hakim 'disappeared'. The historical circumstances of his disappearance are disputed by scholars but for the purposes of Druze doctrine al-Hakim went into 'occultation' (*ghayba*), in the tradition of other Shi'ite Imams.[4] The issue of al-Hakim and his early followers as *historical* figures is not particularly important in Druze belief.[5]

The period following the disappearance of al-Hakim marked the end of Druzism as a new religious movement sanctioned by the state and supported by the traditional structures of the Isma'ili *da'wa*. With the succession of al-Zahir to the Fatimid caliphate a mass persecution (known by the Druze as the period of the *mihna*) of the *muwahhidun* was instigated. Most of the leaders of the *da'wa,* including Hamza, left Egypt for Syria. According to Druze tradition it was during this period that the Druze Canon, 'Rasa'il al-Hikma' ('The Epistles of Wisdom') was collected. It contains 111 epistles arranged into six books, the earliest epistle dating from 1017 and the last from 1042. In that year the *da'wa* was officially closed, proselytization came to an end, and according to Druze belief there have been no converts to Druzism since this date.

The closing of the *da'wa* had tremendous significance for the future of Druzism; it enabled the Druze who had fled to the Levant to develop as a distinct community with strong particularistic tendencies, something which has been of political importance throughout nearly a thousand years of Druze history. What exactly is meant by Druze 'particularism' will be addressed in greater depth later in the book.[6]

From the closing of the *da'wa* to the Ottoman Empire, 1042–1516

With the migration of the Druze from Egypt to Syria and the closing of the *da'wa* the Druze community began to develop as a coherent political force in the medieval Levant. The leaders of the various

Druze dynasties used their local power bases to make and break alliances with various external powers, setting a pattern for an often rocky relationship with the outside world. The most important Druze dynasty during this early period was that of the Tanukhi family, and the Tanukhi relationship with both the Mamlukes and the Crusaders deserves some attention.

Established in the eighth century in the coastal region of Beirut and the mountains of the hinterland in southern Lebanon the Bani Tanukh were converted to Druzism during the first phase of the *da'wa*. Tanukhi power was centred in Shuwayfat, first in the hands of the Arslan branch of the family (eighth to twelfth centuries), and then in the hands of the Buhturi branch (twelfth to sixteenth centuries), until the expansion into Lebanon of the Ottoman Empire. Their most lasting significance lies in the teachings of the great Druze sage and Tanukhi Emir, Jamal al-Din 'Abdallah al-Tanukhi (1417–79), known to the Druze as *al-sayyid* (master).[7]

The Druze of this early period are mentioned by the medieval Hispano–Jewish travel writer Benjamin of Tudela. During his trip through the Lebanon between 1169 and 1171 he came across Druze living near Sidon:

> Ten miles therefrom a people dwell who are at war with the men of Sidon; they are called Druses, and are pagans of a lawless character. They inhabit the mountains and the clefts of the rocks; they have no king or ruler but dwell independent in these high places, and their border extends to Mount Hermon which is a three-days journey.

Benjamin briefly comments on their relationship with the Jews of the area, stating that:

> there are no resident Jews among them, but a certain number of Jewish handicraftsmen and dyers come among them for the sake of trade, and then return, the people being favourable to the Jews. They roam over the mountains and hills and no man can do battle with them.[8]

This is the earliest hint of any connection between the Druze and the Jews. It has been made much of by modern scholars looking for

historical antecedents of the pro-Israeli position held by many Israeli Druze.[9] This historical antecedence is overstated. Benjamin of Tudela's comments reveal no more than that a cordial trading relationship existed in the twelfth century between the Druze of the Shuf mountains and a few local Jewish artisans. It is grasping at straws to suggest that there is any historical connection between this cordiality and a twentieth-century political alliance born out of specific economic and political circumstances.

Druze relations with the Mamluke state ruling from Egypt were variable. At the famous battle of 'Ayn Jalut in 1260, where the Mamlukes stopped the Mongols' westward advance, the Druze are said to have fought on both sides. Consequently, the Mamlukes distanced themselves from the Druze as the Mongol threat receded in the years following the battle. Only after the Mamlukes finished retaking Syria from the Crusaders did they accept Druze soldiers back into their service. Once back in favour, many members of the Buhturi family were taken into the *halqa*, the Mamluke cavalry and as a consequence received small *iqta'*s (estates), thus becoming part of the feudal system.[10] This stable relationship between the Buhturis and the Mamlukes remained intact until the Mamlukes were defeated by the Ottomans in 1516.

The military and political role of the Druze during the Crusades is poorly documented and those secondary sources that do mention Druze attitudes towards the Crusaders often conflict. According to Makarem 'the Tanukhids were noted for their frequent victories in the struggle against the Crusaders'.[11] Abu Salih supports this view, describing the fierce resistance that the Tanukhis put up against the Crusaders when the latter took Beirut.[12] On the other hand, Gabriel Ben Dor makes the unsupported statement that 'during the Crusades [the Druze] seem to have switched sides more than once'.[13] Salibi, when discussing the relationship between the Tanukhis and the Mamlukes, states that the Mamlukes held the Tanukhis in deep suspicion after their collaboration with the Mongols at 'Ayn Jalut, and that during the years of Crusader activity in Syria the Mamlukes held many leading members of the Tanukhi family hostage, having temporarily revoked their *iqta'*s as insurance against any possible Druze alliance with the Crusaders.[14]

It should be remembered when discussing the Druze role during the Crusades that twentieth-century scholars often evaluate the matter

with current historical reality in mind. Indeed, some scholars, such as Ben Dor, interpret Druze co-operation with the Crusaders as in some way predetermining, or setting the norm, for later Druze political behaviour, and specifically their co-operation with Zionism. Readers should be wary of this normative view of Druze history. The period of the Crusades was not one of clear-cut conflict between East and West, in which to fight with the West was a 'betrayal' in the twentieth-century sense of the term.

The Druze in the Ottoman Empire, 1516–1917

The Lebanon remained the centre of Druze power during the early Ottoman period, a period dominated by the Ma'nid Dynasty. When the Ottomans defeated the Mamlukes in 1516 and subsequently established the Ottoman Empire in the Levant, the Ma'nids emerged as the most prominent Druze clan because, according to Hitti, 'they threw in their lot with the conquering invaders'.[15] Somewhat predictably, Abu–Izzeddin sees things the other way round; according to her account the Ottomans came to the Ma'nids and invested them with the government of the Shuf out of respect for the 'old established tradition of Druze independence under their own emirs'.[16] Salibi questions the notion that the Ottomans were pro-Ma'nid, stating that this was fabricated by later Shihabi historians in order to 'provide the Shihab regime in Lebanon, as the successor of the Ma'nid regime, with an Ottoman legitimacy dating back to the time of the conquest'.[17]

Whatever actually lay behind the Ma'nids' rise to prominence, there is no question that the success of the dynasty in Lebanon was a turning point in Druze history. The Ma'nids solidified the Druze's centrality in the political affairs of the region, a centrality which the Druze still possess today. The heyday of Ma'nid power was the rule of Fakhr al-Din Ma'n II (1585–1633).[18] During his reign the area which he controlled came to include nearly all of Syria, from the edge of the Antioch plain in the north to Safad in the south.

Some historians have accepted the almost mythologized picture of his rule painted in Lebanese and Druze history: Fakhr al-Din was 'the first to establish a state practically independent from Constantinople, [and] is regarded . . . as the founder of modern Lebanon'.[19] More recently, scholars have questioned this view. Salibi cites the work of

the Jordanian historian ʻAdnan Bakhit, in which Fakhr al-Din emerges merely as a 'Syrian strongman who was given leeway by the Ottomans to subdue and destroy other provincial leaderships in Syria on their behalf and who was himself destroyed in the end to make way for a firmer control by the Ottoman state over the Syrian eyalets'.[20] Certainly the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Maʻnid dynasty seems to have been uneasy. The two often came to blows when the Druze felt that the Ottomans had encroached upon their relative autonomy, or when the Ottomans felt that that autonomy had become a threat to the integrity of the Empire. In 1523 the Ottoman army burned down many Druze villages in the Shuf after Druze insubordination, and in 1544 the Ottoman Governor of Damascus executed the first Maʻnid Emir, Fakhr al-Din I. In 1613 the Ottoman Army was sent to cut Fakhr al-Din II down to size after he had extended his dominion to include Hawran and Jawlan (in what is now south–west Syria and the Golan Heights). Fakhr al-Din II was forced into a brief period of exile from which he returned to rule peacefully until 1634, when the Ottomans finally crushed the Maʻnids at the battle of Magharat Jarzin. After that battle, Fakhr al-Din II and his two sons were publicly executed in Constantinople on command of the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV, and Maʻnid power in Syria declined until the death of the last Maʻnid Emir in 1697.[21]

Although during the Maʻnid period the centre of the Druze population remained in and around Mount Lebanon, the number of Druze living outside that area did increase. Specifically, the Druze began to settle in northern Palestine (due partly to the fact that Fakhr al-Din served for a brief period as Governor of Safad) as well as in the Hawran. Druze migration from Mount Lebanon continued through the eighteenth century, although not as a result of Druze expansionism, as had been the case under the Maʻnids, but rather because of war.[22]

During the eighteenth century the Druze suffered from internecine conflict, following the golden era of Maʻnid rule. Various disputes between different Druze families caused many more Druze to flee to the Hawran, particularly after two rival Druze factions fought it out in 1711 at the battle of ʻAyn Dara. There followed the establishment of the Druze community in what is now known as Jabal Druze.[23] The Ottoman authorities exploited these conflicts in order to maintain their own influence in the region, switching their support from one group to another on the basis of political expediency.[24]

At the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth the Ottoman authorities attempted to establish firmer control over the Empire and to reduce the power of the regional nobility. As a consequence, the mid-nineteenth century witnessed a reining in of the great families' local influence.[25] The nineteenth century also saw unprecedented European involvement in Middle Eastern affairs, with different European nations adopting various minority groups in the region as clients and as surrogates through which they could wield their own power. It is against this backdrop of growing European imperialism that the fortunes of the Druze in the nineteenth century must be examined.

Muhammad 'Ali's invasion of Syria in 1832 brought a new external challenge to the Druze. The attempts of his son Ibrahim Pasha to conscript the Druze into the Egyptian army (a large contingent of Christians willingly fought alongside Ibrahim Pasha) proved very unpopular and caused Druze resentment towards their new Egyptian rulers to grow. This resentment culminated in a Druze uprising against Ibrahim Pasha in 1838. The Egyptians crushed the Druze rebels, and the consequent disarming of many Druze further weakened Druze power in the area. The fact that arms were simultaneously being distributed to the Christians was typical of the manipulative politics outsiders played with the different religious groups in the region.[26]

Muhammad 'Ali's invasion of Syria was significant in Druze history in another way, for it marked the beginning of the so-called 'special relationship' established between the British government and the Druze.[27] That the British supported the Druze because the Maronites had already been 'taken' by the French is clear from a dispatch sent by Colonel Rose, the British Consul in Beirut, to his government:

> The Maronites are dedicated body and soul to France and England no longer has any choice; it must proceed with the Druzes.[28]

The relationship between the British and the Druze never had the emotional depth of the French–Maronite relationship, mainly because of British apathy in nurturing it. However there were several instances of British political support for the Druze which punctuated the last half of the nineteenth century.

This courting of minority groups in Lebanon and Syria by the Great Powers in the nineteenth century was mirrored a hundred years later when the Zionists tried to ally themselves with those same minorities. Just as in the nineteenth century the Maronites had been the Lebanese most favoured by the French, so they became the focus of Zionist attentions in the twentieth century.[29]

Sectarian violence between the Druze and the Maronites erupted in 1841 and 1845. The Ottoman authorities made some effort to prevent the escalation of the problem after 1841, including the division of Mount Lebanon into two *qa'im-maqamiyya*s (subdistricts), one Maronite, one Druze. The failure of this move became obvious in the violence of 1845 when 14 Druze villages were burnt down by the Maronites.[30] The Druze–Maronite civil war of 1858–60 was the culmination of this tension. Up to 12 000 people were reported to have died and 60 villages destroyed, most of the dead and most of the villages burnt being Christian. The Ottoman authorities allegedly stood by and let events take their course.[31] Their policy during this period was to support the Druze, afraid as they were of growing Maronite hegemony in the area.[32] Churchill, a contemporary observer, gives a colourful and somewhat hyperbolic view of the attitude of the Sublime Porte towards the massacres:

> To the Turks, this boiling and fuming of the worst passions of human nature surging over into the fury of civil strife and discord, was as the odour of sweet smelling sacrifice. Wilfully and purposefully did they promote the hateful struggle; for through such bloody dissensions they saw the only chance of establishing their own exclusive sway over Lebanon.[33]

The violence spread to Damascus where the Christian quarter was set on fire and 6000 Christians were massacred.[34]

At this point a convention called between France, Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia and Turkey, agreed to act and France sent 7000 troops under General Beaufort d'Hautpoul. By the time the French arrived, however, relative tranquillity had been re-established through the efforts of Fu'ad Pasha, the Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs.[35] Fu'ad Pasha set up an international commission and with the help of Lord Dufferin (who represented Britain on the commission) they succeeded in pre-empting any major French military

action. Dufferin's efforts on the commission reflected official British policy towards the Druze role in the massacres. Without wanting to alienate public opinion in Britain, where popular sympathy was certainly for the Christian Maronites, Dufferin tried to maintain the positive links that the British had forged with the Druze in the 1840s by shifting some of the responsibility for the massacres onto the Turks. He also successfully challenged the French attempt to have Sa'id Bey Junbalat executed.[36] In the end 48 Druze were condemned to death, 11 sentenced to life imprisonment and 249 to detention or exile. Several Druze fled to the Hawran to avoid prosecution.[37]

Western scholars have tended to view the Ottomans and the Druze as the main culprits of the 1860 massacres, and to paint a somewhat martyrish picture of the Maronites. Recently some have called this view into question, partly by dismantling the traditional notion that the Christians were entirely victims in the civil war.[38] The reasons usually given for the outbreak of the sectarian violence – such as French bolstering of the Maronites in the face of traditional Druze hegemony, and the increasing political power of the Maronite clergy[39] – although valid, have been put in perspective by more recent studies that show social and economic upheaval to be the main cause of the disturbances. According to this new view, it was the 1858 revolt of the Maronite peasantry against the large landowning families in Kisrawan (particularly the Khazins) that was the major catalyst for the events that followed two years later, when both the Druze and the Christian nobility sought to transmute social unrest directed against them into a confessional conflict.[40] These events should also be seen in the context of the economic changes taking place at that time, mainly brought about by the expansion of usury and trade on Mount Lebanon. These economic changes served to hasten the decline of the traditional feudal system in the Mountain and can thus be placed at the heart of the conflict between Druze and Christians.[41]

In the wake of the events of 1860 the centre of Druze political activity shifted to the Hawran. Nevertheless, the Druze were represented on the Administrative Council set up in 1861 to aid in ruling post-civil-war Lebanon. Under these reforms, Lebanon was reconstituted into a single Ottoman *mutasarrifiyya* (district), and the old, feudal *iltizam* tax-farming system was formally abolished and replaced by direct taxation. In 1864 the balance of power in the Administrative

Council was tipped in favour of the Maronites. With four Maronites to three Druze, Maronite hegemony in Mount Lebanon was confirmed.[42]

The shift of political focus from Mount Lebanon to the Hawran did not put an end to the Druze's troubles. Indeed, the last two decades of the nineteenth century saw the Druze of the Hawran coming into serious conflict with the Ottoman authorities.[43] In 1877–79 a series of violent clashes erupted between the Druze and the local Sunni Hawrani population. The imperial army was sent in and succeeded in settling the problem fairly peacefully. The British Vice-Consul in Damascus apparently put pressure on the Ottomans to concede to Druze demands for some degree of independence from the Sublime Porte.[44] A Druze Governorship of the Hawran was established along with an all-Druze *majlis* (council), both ultimately answerable to the Ottoman Governor in Damascus. During this period the prominence of the al-Atrash family grew, with Ibrahim al-Atrash eventually becoming the Druze Governor.[45]

Conflict over high taxation and Ottoman favouring of Beduin tribes over the Druze led to renewed fighting, however, with the result that in 1896 the Ottomans sent 30 000 troops to the Hawran under the command of Tahir Pasha, the Governor of Damascus.[46] In September 1896, the British Consul General in Damascus wrote to his government:

> If it is still considered desirable to extend to them [i.e., the Druze] a helping hand, now, if ever, is the moment to my mind.[47]

But the British took no action and in 1897 the Druze surrendered. Although they had been promised an amnesty by the Ottomans, many Druze were in fact arrested and exiled to Tripoli, Cyprus and Anatolia. In 1900 the amnesty was finally granted and many of the exiled Druze returned to the Hawran.

The events of the last two decades of the nineteenth century in the Hawran were significant in two respects. They showed that the centre of the periodic conflict between the Druze and the Ottomans over the question of Druze autonomy versus Ottoman control, had shifted from Mount Lebanon to the Hawran. And they proved that the British, although willing to exert a minimum of diplomatic pressure on behalf of the Druze, were not prepared to use force in the

way that the French had done for the Maronites in 1860, for fear of upsetting their relationship with the Sublime Porte, which was clearly viewed as much more important.[48]

The Druze and the transition of power from the Ottoman to European empires

The Druze desire for autonomy and the Ottoman desire for control of Jabal Druze continued after the Young Turks effectively seized power from the Ottoman Sultanate in 1908. The Young Turks demanded that the Druze in the Hawran participate in a census with a view to holding elections for the parliament in Istanbul. The Druze remained keen to maintain as much autonomy from Istanbul as possible, and refused, with the result that the Turks were forced to send troops to the Hawran in 1910. In 1911 several members of the al-Atrash family were publicly hanged in Damascus and for a while Jabal Druze was brought under the direct control of Istanbul. But the Turks could not control Jabal Druze without leaving a large garrison there, and when they withdrew the bulk of their forces in late 1911 the area returned to its previous semi-autonomous status.[49]

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and the Arab Revolt of 1916–19 brought many changes to political alliances in the Middle East, with Druze support being courted by both the Ottomans and the Allies.[50] Two main factions emerged within the al-Atrash family during this period, one pro-Turk and the other pro-Arab Nationalist. With the arrival of the Allied armies in Syria in the summer of 1918 Sultan al-Atrash called on all Druze to unite with the Nationalist cause and he and his followers fought on the side of the Allies and the Nationalists in the battle for Damascus in October 1918.[51] Sultan al-Atrash's support for the Arab Nationalists gained him an agreement guaranteeing Druze autonomy in Jabal Druze.

The decision to place Syria and Lebanon under the mandate of the French in 1920 at the Peace Conference in San Remo not only thwarted the Nationalists' ambitions for an independent Syria but also caused anxiety amongst the Druze. Given traditional French support for Maronite aspirations, the Druze had no desire to live under French rule, preferring instead to be placed under the jurisdiction of their old allies, the British. However, the carve-up of the

Middle East at San Remo placed only a small number of Druze, those living in Palestine and Trans–Jordan, under British control.

Druze culture and society

The Druze are a mainly rural people living in small towns and villages and dependent upon farming for their livelihood. They are similar in many ways to other Levantine Arabs. They speak as well as worship in Arabic and on the whole they observe the same traditional rural customs as their Muslim and Christian neighbours. Ethnically they derive from the same mixture of origins as other Arabs of the eastern Mediterranean, although some Druze are very fair, particularly those in the Galilee, a fact which popular tradition attributes to Crusader blood. Unlike Christian Arabs, the Druze are not readily distinguishable by their names. They often have traditional Muslim names or neutral names of no specific religious significance.

In spite of these similarities, the Druze possess a strong sense of separateness from surrounding communities. This is partly due to the fact that as members of isolated rural and mountain communities they are physically separated from mainstream urban culture. It is also due to the many religious differences between the Druze and the Sunni Muslim majority of the Levant.[52]

Druze society is divided in two main groups: those who have been initiated into the secrets of Druze doctrine, the *'uqqal* (the 'wise'), and those who have not, the *juhhal* (the 'ignorant'). From the ranks of the *'uqqal* are drawn the religious elders known as the *masha'ikh al-din*, and in each Druze region there is a chief elder known as the *shaykh al-'aql*. The *shaykh al-'aql* is in charge of the religious affairs of the community. In Palestine he has traditionally been selected from the Tarif family of the village of Julis. The status of the *'uqqal* in Druze communities is indicated by their white head-dress. They are enjoined to behave in a dignified and reserved manner and not to engage in immoral activities such as consuming alcohol or smoking. The *juhhal*, on the other hand, are allowed to smoke and drink but are not encouraged to do so. In smaller, more isolated Druze communities such as those in Palestine, the religious leaders tended to take a strong political role. In the larger Druze communities of Lebanon and Syria, however, the most politically dominant families have sometimes come from the ranks of the *juhhal,* the Junbalat family of

Lebanon being the most obvious example. Where the political leadership of the community is in the hands of a *juhhal* family, the *'uqqal* will defer to them on political matters.

Druze religion

As was made clear in the historical survey the origins of Druzism lie in Islam. Druzism was originally a schismatic religious movement that broke off from Fatimid Isma'ilism – itself a Shi'ite sect – in the eleventh century AD. It is therefore two large steps removed from mainstream Islam. But it is important to remember that, in spite of the many differences between Druzism and Sunni Islam, Druzism did evolve from Islam and many of the tenets of Druzism have Islamic origins. At the heart of Druze doctrine stands the profession of God's unity (*tawhid*). *Tawhid* is also absolutely central to Sunni Islam and could not in any way be said to be un-Islamic.[53] The centrality of this tenet in Druzism is why the Druze often call themselves Unitarians (*muwahhidun*).[54]

Many of the Druze epistles (*Rasa'il al-hikma*) written down in the first 30 years of the Druze *da'wa* before its cessation in 1042, appear to be little more than allegorical interpretations of the Qur'an, and as such could be said to be Qur'an-based.[55] In short Druzism was born out of an eleventh-century Isma'ili religious tradition that was itself steeped in mahdist Shi'ite millenarianism as well as in Neoplatonic cosmology and hierohistory.

One important way in which present-day Druzism differs from Sunni Islam is that Druzism is not a proselytizing religion, and so the Druze seek no converts. The Druze believe that the spiritual well-being of the community is sustained through the process of reincarnation (*tanasukh*): when a Druze dies his spirit is passed on to a new-born baby. This belief in reincarnation is anathema to Sunni Islam. Nor do the Druze believe in the finality of Muhammad's prophecy, another central tenet of Sunni Islam. Instead they believe that al-Hakim served as the locus (*maqam*) of the final revelation of God's Unity. This is perhaps the most irrevocable difference between Druzism and mainstream Islam.

In addition, the Druze do not worship in mosques on Fridays as do Sunni Muslims; rather, they gather every Thursday in a meeting house (*al-khalwa)* to discuss the affairs of the village and to study the

Rasa'il al-hikma. The *juhhal* are allowed to attend only the first, secular session in the *khilwa*, the spiritual part being reserved for the *'uqqal*. The Druze do not pray five times a day towards Mecca nor do they believe in the Five Pillars of Islam, apart of course from the most important, *tawhid*. Instead, the Druze profess what are referred to as the 'Seven Principles' which, unlike the Five Pillars, are allegorical rather than ritualistic in nature. The Druze do not fast during the month of Ramadan (although some Druze do celebrate *'id al fitr*, the holiday marking the end of the month[56]), nor do they make the pilgrimage to Mecca (although again they do celebrate *'id al-adha*, the holiday marking the return of the pilgrims from Mecca). These central differences show that while Druzism has its origins in an Islamic past the Druze cannot properly be called Muslims. The Druze certainly do not regard themselves as Muslims, nor are they regarded as Muslims by Muslims.

There is a Druze saying that the Shi'ites deserve fifty curses and the Sunnis forty. They have a slightly better view of the Christians, who only deserve thirty curses, while the Jews are their favourites, deserving a mere twenty curses.[57] The fact that the Druze lived under a series of different Muslim rulers and suffered on and off at the hands of those rulers would account for the feelings of antipathy towards Islam. Predictably, the Druze's relatively affectionate attitude towards the Jews has been made much of by modern scholars in the context of the present-day political alliance between the two groups. There is a little evidence that the Druze relationship with the Jews was perhaps not as uniformly hostile as their relationships with other religious groups, and the historical survey above touches on some of this, but the point must not be overstated. Betts's claim that the fact that 'the Jews are the least condemned might account for the relatively good relations the Druze enjoy in Israel with the Zionist Government', is certainly ahistorical.[58]

The role of the religious doctrine of *taqiya* in Druze political behaviour is another issue which has been taken up enthusiastically by several modern scholars, and it deserves special attention.

Taqiya

The principle of *taqiya* is Shi'ite in origin. The word means 'prudence', 'carefulness' or 'wariness', and in Shi'ite Islam it came to have the

sense of hiding one's true beliefs in a time of crisis or persecution; hence the typical English translation 'dissimulation'. As a tenet it is present not only in Twelver Shi'ism but also in Isma'ilism and amongst the 'Alawites.

The role of *taqiya* in Druze political behaviour deserves special treatment because *taqiya* has been used to explain Druze co-operation with the State of Israel, a co-operation whose origins are the subject of this book. The proponents of this use of *taqiya* are mainly Israeli historians and sociologists who have seized upon the term as a nifty heuristic device. These include the scholars Haim Blanc, Aharon Layish and Gabriel Ben Dor.[59] Blanc describes *taqiya* vis-à-vis the Druze as being 'an age-old, deeply ingrained custom, almost a cultural trait', and goes on to claim that the 'most recent instance of this outward assimilation may be seen in present day Israel'.[60] Layish states baldly that Druze political behaviour 'is guided by Taqiya'.[61]

The Israeli Druze historian Kais Firro has criticized this normative interpretation of Druze history:

> *Taqiya* in itself is not sufficient explanation for the political behaviour of the Druze. Various and complex factors determine such behaviour – some peculiar to the Druze, others common to Middle East ethnopolitics. . . . if one considers that the practice of *taqiya* makes the Druze 'like lambs', forever joining the side that seems likely to win, what explains their revolt against the Egyptians in 1838, the Ottomans in 1890 and the French in 1925? And what motivated the political crisis in the Golan Heights from 1978 to 1982 and the Shuf war in 1982?[62]

Firro's argument also relies on the fact that Druze writings contain no mention whatsoever of *taqiya*, and that the sources that are cited as evidence that the Druze practise *taqiya* are dubious and misleading.[63]

If there is a thread that does run through Druze political history it is one of particularism: the Druze have continually maintained a strong sense of their separateness as a community. But the political behaviour of their leaders has been determined by specific, local circumstances: those occasions when outside forces tried to restrict Druze autonomy and the Druze found themselves in a militarily strong position, are the occasions when the Druze came into conflict

with imperial authorities and their local surrogates. On the other hand, when outside forces tried to restrict Druze autonomy and the Druze found themselves in a weak position, the Druze co-operated with the imperial authorities and complied with the restrictions.

Occasions also arose when Druze leaders differed amongst themselves over what was best for the community, or when, during periods of factionalism, individual Druze simply used outside forces to bolster their own personal power. Like any minority group their political behaviour was based on preserving their economic and political interests as a separate community. The alliance between certain Palestinian Druze leaders and the Jews in the twentieth century must be viewed in this context.

1
The Druze and the Jews in Mandatory Palestine, 1917–1947

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the British conquest of Palestine in 1917–18 marked the beginning of a new era in the region.[1] No longer an Ottoman province, but part of the British Empire, the area and its future had changed direction. For the Palestinians, British rule brought the enactment of the Balfour Declaration and the legitimization of a 'Jewish home' in Palestine. Although Zionism had been a political force in Palestine since the end of the 1870s, the Balfour Declaration greatly strengthened the Zionist hand, and the voices of protest raised in Palestinian political circles against Jewish immigration from Europe became more strident. The period that followed saw an increasing tension between the Palestinian and Jewish communities which was expressed in several outbreaks of violence and which culminated in the Arab–Israeli war of 1947–49 and the establishment of the State of Israel. This chapter will focus on the Druze–Jewish relationship during that period and discuss how the links formed between the two communities served as the basis of Druze co-operation with the Jewish forces during the 1947–49 war.

Early contacts, 1920–36

The Druze community in Palestine at the beginning of the Mandate totalled approximately 7000 people (less than 1 per cent of the total population of 750 000). They lived in the north of Palestine, in 18 villages; two on Mount Carmel ('Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal) just outside the city of Haifa, the remaining 16 in the Galilee. In a few of these villages they formed a minority in a mixed community of

Muslims and/or Christians, the most notable being Shafa'amr in the lower Galilee, al-Rama in the upper Galilee, and Kafr Yasif in the western Galilee. In others they shared the village with a significant Muslim and/or Christian population while remaining in the majority. The villagers were almost entirely dependent on agriculture and pasturage for their livelihoods; they lived a quiet life outside the political arena and carried none of the political weight of their brother Druze communities in Lebanon and Syria. The Palestinian Druze were a particularistic community in the sense that they had a strong awareness of their separateness from their Christian and Muslim neighbours, and they played little part in Palestinian political life, which was the domain of the educated Muslim and Christian urban elite.[2]

Whereas the Druze communities in Lebanon and Syria boasted powerful leading families who were large property owners (the Junbalat family in Lebanon and the al-Atrash in Syria being two examples) the Druze in Palestine did not have large property-owning families on the same scale, or with the same political influence. Some families were, however, more prominent than others, usually because a member of a family had risen to religious prominence. The Tarif family of Julis had, for example, rebuilt the tomb of the prophet Shu'ayb at the end of the nineteenth century.[3] The prominence of the Tarif family had been greatly enhanced when Shaykh Tarif Muhammad Tarif was appointed *qadi* of the province by the Ottoman authorities at around the same time. This prominence was challenged from within the Druze community in Palestine by two other prominent families, the Mu'addi family of Yarka and the Khayr family of Abu Snan. The rivalries that existed between these families were to be of some significance when the relationship between the Druze and the Jews became an issue of political importance for the future of the community in Palestine.[4]

Because of their relative paucity and their geographical isolation, the Palestinian Druze looked to the Druze in Syria and Lebanon for political leadership. The international borders drawn up by the French and the British at the beginning of the Mandate period, dividing Lebanon and Syria and Palestine, would have made little difference to the Druze community in Palestine in terms of their geographical perception of themselves. Many Palestinian Druze had relatives on Jabal Druze, and travel to and fro had been fairly easy, at

least under the Ottomans. A small Palestinian Druze contingent fought in the 1925–27 Druze rebellion against the French in Jabal Druze, and many Syrian Druze, after their defeat by the French, fled to Palestine to take refuge amongst the Druze community there. Because of their particularism the Palestinian Druze saw themselves more as a part of the larger Druze community than as a part of the Muslim-dominated Palestinian community around them. They kept themselves to themselves and in times of political upheaval they looked north for guidance, to the leading Druze families in Lebanon and Syria.

As far as Druze relations with the Jewish community in Palestine were concerned there is no evidence to suggest that there were any special problems between the two communities. But although relations were not particularly problematic, nor were they particularly harmonious, as has been suggested by some writers on the early Mandate period. Koren, for example, makes much of the cordial relations between certain Druze villages and neighbouring kibbutzes, but this is a refrain often heard about relations between kibbutzes and *Muslim* villages in the same period. Any significance that is placed on the fact that a Druze village traded with a kibbutz is an imposition on the past of contemporary relations between Druze and Jews.[5]

The Balfour Declaration and the consequent strengthening of the Zionist position in Palestine totally altered the balance of power, or at least the perceived balance of power, between the communities living there.[6] During the 1920s the Yishuv went from strength to strength. At least 100 000 Jews entered Palestine in this decade, Jewish land-ownership doubled, and membership of the Histadrut (the Jewish Labour Federation founded in 1920) more than quadrupled. There were 34 kibbutzim established between 1919 and 1929, the Hebrew University was established in 1925, the Jewish literacy rate was the highest in the Middle East and the infant mortality was the lowest.[7] This change brought about a corresponding increase of opposition to Zionism in the Arab community resulting in outbreaks of violence in April 1920 and May 1921. A period of relative tranquillity prevailed until August 1929, when the first serious, large-scale rioting took place between the two communities. That year Jewish political leaders had also set up the Jewish Agency, which was to become the *de facto* government of the Yishuv. In the wake of the rioting in 1929 the Agency recognized the need to study and make

contact with the surrounding Palestinian community as well as with the wider Arab world.

The 'Joint Bureau for Arab Affairs' was established in 1930 by the Jewish Agency and Jewish National Council in this spirit. The purpose of the Bureau was to make contacts with Arabs both inside and outside Mandatory Palestine and it quickly became interested in the question of the Druze. Tuvia Ashkenazi, the Bureau's agent in Damascus, toured the Druze areas of Syria in the summer of 1930 to 'report on the situation in these regions'. The Druze on the Jabal had gained a reputation as a cohesive military force after they had shown fierce resistance in fighting the French in the 1925–27 uprising in Syria. For this reason their allegiances and outlook were thought to be important.[8]

The Druze in Palestine were not involved in the rioting that took place in 1929, even though it spread as far north as Haifa and Safad. The Druze had, in effect, taken a neutral position, more by default than as a matter of coherent policy. The riots had strong religious overtones; they had been sparked off by a dispute between Muslims and Jews in Jerusalem over Jewish access to the Western Wall. Many of the Arab attacks had been on religious Jews, such as the orthodox Jews in Hebron and Safad. The religious nature of the conflict made it easier for the Druze to remain uninvolved, and there were also very few instances of Christian involvement in the rioting. The Muslim majority in Palestine was gaining strength as a political force (the establishment of the Higher Muslim Council in 1922 was an expression of this) and the riots had shown the Muslim leadership the power that religious tension could unleash. The Druze were not attracted to a nationalist movement which had strong Muslim overtones. In 1930 they asked the British authorities for a seat on the Legislative Council, that would give them representation independent of the Muslims. The British refused, but the Druze petition was an indication of their strong desire to act independently from the Muslim community.[9]

There was, however, some support for Palestinian nationalism from a few Druze intellectuals outside Palestine. Two Lebanese Druze, Shakib and 'Adil Arslan, were activists in the Syrian *Istiqlal* party which took an anti-Zionist position. They also had some contact with Haj Amin al-Husayni, President of the Higher Muslim Council who was rapidly becoming the most prominent of the

leaders of the nationalist movement. Other Lebanese Druze living in Haifa were active in the Palestinian nationalist movement, but they were individuals who by no means represented Druze interests or aspirations.[10]

Certain prominent figures in the Jewish Agency noticed the lack of Druze involvement in the riots with interest. Itzhak Ben Tzvi, an Arabist, (later the second president of Israel) who was chairman of the National Council and co-director of the Joint Bureau for Arab Affairs, was one of the first influential members of the Jewish political community to take an interest in the question of the Druze.[11] In the summer of 1930 a Muslim policeman was killed near the Druze village of Maghar. A Druze man from the village was arrested for the murder and some other villagers were apparently the victims of revenge attacks from the mainly Muslim police force. Ben Tzvi used his influence to get the Druze prisoner released from jail. This incident marked the beginning of a close co-operative relationship between Ben Tzvi and the Druze. He was helped in his work by Aharon Haim Cohen, an intelligence officer attached to the Joint Bureau.[12] Cohen was also an Arabist and recognized the potential benefits of a Jewish–Druze dialogue. In August 1930 both Ben Tzvi and his wife visited the Druze villages of Maghar and al-Rama. On their return Ben Tzvi drafted a report for the Bureau entitled 'The Establishing of Good Relations with our Neighbours, the Druze in Eretz Israel'. In the report he sets out a series of preliminary steps that should be taken to show the friendship of the Jewish community towards the Druze, although he makes sure to place these steps within the context of the overall job of the Bureau, namely, to establish good relations with the Arab community as a whole. He talks of the importance of including the Druze community in any plans to offer bank loans to the Arabs; he also states that Jewish lawyers should be ready to offer legal aid to the Druze 'in matters concerning pressure which may be put on them from time to time by the government or by the Muslims or Christians'.[13]

Ben Tzvi saw these acts of friendship as being a necessary precursor to the more important objective of forming links with the much more powerful and influential Druze communities in Lebanon and Syria; 'after these initial steps we should establish relations with [the Druze] leaders in Hawran, Syria and the Republic of Lebanon'. This emphasis on establishing good relations with the Druze in Palestine

as a means to making contact with the Druze across the border was to become the central theme of Israeli policy towards the Palestinian Druze community throughout the years that followed and into the 1948 war. The Druze were to play an essential role in Israeli overtures to minority groups in the Middle East which formed part of the 'Orientation towards the Minorities', a policy that was to emerge from the Jewish Agency in the late 1930s.[14]

Colonel F.H. Kisch, co-head of the Joint Bureau with Ben Tzvi, was not so enthusiastic about the Druze in Palestine: 'I do not attribute great importance to this small community of fellaheen [peasants], and therefore see no justification for special action on their behalf.'[15] He was, however, prepared to concede that they might have some usefulness in the sense that 'their main importance' lay in the links that they had with their leaders in the north. Kisch had a more mercenary attitude towards relations with the Arabs than Ben Tzvi, an Arabist who seemed to believe genuinely in the idea of fostering good relations between the Arab and Jewish communities. Kisch, on the other hand, was a British Army officer who had come to Palestine in 1922 at the request of Chaim Weizmann to direct the Palestine Zionist Executive. Weizmann had chosen 'this *pukka* Anglo-Jewish officer and diplomat' because he thought that he could improve relations with the British administration in Palestine. This was also Kisch's area of expertise and objective and he did not have much time for what he regarded as Ben Tzvi's dabbling with the Druze.[16]

Ben Tzvi was not deterred by Kisch's lukewarm attitude to Jewish–Druze relations. In December 1930 he was able to use his growing influence with the Druze community to act as a mediator in a conflict that had broken out between Jews and Druze in Buqay'a, a Druze village in the central Galilee that had long had a small community of Jews living in it. When a small delegation of Jews from Buqay'a visited Ben Tzvi in his capacity as director of the Bureau, complaining that they had been mistreated by the Druze in the village, he appealed to Salman Tarif to settle the matter. It was Tarif who had asked Ben Tzvi for help when a Druze villager had been arrested in Maghar and Ben Tzvi had helped him; now it was time for Tarif to return the favour. He met with the village heads in Buqay'a and they undertook to guarantee the safety of the Jews in the village. He wrote to Ben Tzvi:

> I summoned to me Shaykh ‘Abdallah al-Salih from the village of Peki’in [Hebrew name of the same village] and I made it clear to him that he must help our Jewish brothers in Peki’in and that not one Druze should hurt them because every blow on them will be as if it is a blow falling on me myself.[17]

Although this incident was localized it was important because it indicated the potential benefits of a Druze–Jewish friendship. Ben Tzvi had been in a position to protect Jews because of contacts made in the Druze community. For sceptics in the Jewish Agency this demonstrated the benefits of a co-operative relationship at a local level. It showed that good relations with the Druze in Palestine should not be seen purely in terms of their being merely a stepping stone to the Druze in Lebanon and Syria.[18]

During the 1930s the question of the Zionist–Druze relationship came to play a major role in the rivalries that existed within the Druze community. These family rivalries had their roots in a time that preceded Zionist settlement in Palestine and were unrelated to it. But by the 1930s the question of relations with the Zionists further complicated existing conflicts. It is a measure of the prominence that the question of the relationship with the Zionists enjoyed among the Druze leadership at that time that it was a factor in inter-family disputes.

The traditional rivalry between the Khayr family of Abu Snan and the Tarifs of Julis was further exacerbated when ‘Abdallah Khayr established the Druze Union Society in 1932. ‘Abdallah Khayr was the first Palestinian Druze graduate of the American University in Beirut and he had also studied law in Jerusalem. He was politically active and had been influenced by Druze organizations in Beirut in setting up the Druze Union Society. He respected Zionism as a political movement, with all its ancillary political organizations, and based the Society’s charter on a Zionist model. In setting up the Society he hoped to create a political body that would take power over Druze affairs away from the Tarif family. He also wanted the Society to obtain control of the *waqf* (religious endowment) of Nabi Shu‘ayb, thereby removing it from Tarif control. There was certainly a constituency within the Druze community that was only too willing to welcome an alternative power group, and the Druze in general were split into those who supported the Tarif family and those who supported the Khayr family.[19]

The emergence of 'Abdallah Khayr and the Druze Union Society was good for Zionist interests. On the one hand, the Society was a political structure that they could easily understand and do business with, and on the other, it encouraged Druze particularism, something which the Zionists were eager to nurture. The more strongly the Druze felt a sense of their own national identity the more isolated they became from the Palestinian community as a whole and the more receptive they became to the notion of an alliance with the Jews. The Zionists certainly seemed happy to be used as a weapon within the conflict as it exposed them to more information about Druze activities. Cohen and Ben Tzvi had a meeting with 'Abdallah Khayr in April 1932. They were concerned about the political activities of Hani Abu Muslih, the Lebanese Druze living in Haifa who was involved in attacks on Jewish settlements in the Galilee. Khayr reassured them that Abu Muslih did not represent the feelings of the Druze community as a whole and had 'cut all religious and national links' with the Druze community. In both meetings Khayr was quick to point out the growing closeness between the Tarif family and the Higher Muslim Council, implying that in contrast to him and his society, the Tarif family could not be trusted:

> The Shaykh was interested to know if we had written to Shaykh Salman Tarif concerning this matter [Abu Muslih's activities], I told him that I would be very pleased if he would tell me the reason for his interest. He said that he was very sorry to inform us that Shaykh Salman was in the pay of[20] the Muslims.[21]

In the wake of these meetings Cohen made a week-long visit to the Druze villages in the north and wrote a long report of his trip which he copied to the director of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, Moshe Shertok (who, as Moshe Sharett, became Israel's first Foreign Minister in 1948). The report detailed the growing relationship between the Druze community and the Jews and it formed the basis for Jewish policy on the Druze for the next few years. It also institutionalized the issue of the Druze, putting it on the agenda in the Jewish Agency. During his visit Cohen, helped by 'Abdallah Khayr, established many contacts that were going to be made extensive use of in the years to come. These contacts were particularly important because Khayr himself began to lose interest in his political

activities towards the middle of the 1930s, due to the limited response within the Druze community to the Druze Union Society, and because he was appointed as a District Officer by the Mandate authorities thereby becoming an official of the British government.[22] One man who was part of Khayr's coterie, and who met Cohen during his visit, was Shaykh Hasan Abu Rukn. The Abu Rukn family, based in 'Isfiya, was to become one of the most important and influential contacts that the Zionists had in the Druze community. Cohen also met and established contacts with the al-Husayn family in Maghar and the Faraj family in al-Rama.[23]

The activities of Ben Tzvi and Cohen in the late 1920s and the early 1930s provided the foundations of a co-operative relationship between certain figures in the Jewish political establishment and individual Druze. This relationship was to be very valuable to the Zionists during the violent and uncertain period of the Palestinian uprising. The uprising served to strengthen the relationship, pushing the Druze further into the Jewish camp and providing another layer of contacts which would in turn prove their usefulness in the 1947–49 War.

The Palestinian uprising, 1936–39

The period of relative tranquillity that reigned in Palestine in the wake of the rioting in 1929 was short-lived. Greater Jewish immigration was the primary reason for the increasingly confrontational atmosphere towards the middle of the 1930s. Immigration numbers had actually dropped between 1930 and 1931, but suddenly started to rise dramatically after that, so that while there had been just over 4000 Jewish immigrants to Palestine in 1931, in 1935 there were over 66 000. Jews then numbered a third of the total population and 40 per cent of those had arrived in the country since 1930.[24] This was due to a variety of factors: the growth of anti-Semitism in Poland; the strict enforcing of the 1929 quota on immigrants from Eastern Europe in the United States; and the rise to power of the Nazis in Germany in 1933.

More immigrants meant the stepping up of Jewish land purchases mainly from absentee landlords, and Arab peasants were increasingly finding themselves thrown off the land which they and their families had worked for generations. The Yishuv, represented by the

Jewish Agency which had been established in 1929, was politically very well organized. The Agency worked as a parallel administration to the British government, co-ordinating policy on immigration and settlement. The Hagana – the Jewish volunteer army founded in 1920 – was well-developed and organized country-wide (although officially clandestine) and the Histadrut labour federation was becoming increasingly powerful as the flow of new immigrants increased its ranks. In 1936 the Arab Higher Committee, formed the previous year from disparate Arab political groups, called a general strike. The strike was accompanied by widespread attacks by Palestinian rebel groups on Jewish settlements and British soldiers. This was to mark the beginning of the Palestinian uprising that lasted until 1939.

There was pressure on the Druze by the Muslim leadership to join the revolt, and some Druze supported the uprising. A small rebel group from Syria that was made up almost entirely of Syrian Druze and commanded by Hamad Sa'ab fought the British army in September 1936 near the village of Bal'a, upon which it was forced to retreat back to the Lebanon. Another Druze group, made up of Palestinian Druze from the north and led by Qasim Ghadban, was involved in the ambush of a column of British army cars near Tarshiha (a village in the Galilee) in the summer of 1936. A few Druze from 'Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal also joined neighbouring Muslim rebel groups in the surrounding Haifa area. But on the whole, Druze support for the uprising was muted, in spite of leaflets that were being distributed in Druze villages, issued by 'The Supreme Leadership of the Revolt in the North' and calling on the Druze community to join the uprising. Those Druze who were politically active and involved in the dispute were divided over which side to support.[25] Rafik Halabi, the prominent Israeli Druze journalist, wrote of the atmosphere in Daliyat al-Karmal in the early days of the revolt:

> One camp in the village backed the Jews and the Hagana, the underground Jewish Defence Organization. The other camp believed that the village should support the 'Arab Revolt'. My own family sided with the Jews and my father made no secret of his position. I can even remember him putting up a portrait of the nation's revered leader David Ben Gurion, on the wardrobe that dominated the one and only room of our apartment.[26]

The Muslim leadership were not the only ones putting pressure on the Druze. The Jewish Agency also engaged in a propaganda push to dissuade the Druze from joining the Palestinians. At a local level there were two prominent Jews acting on behalf of the Jewish Agency engaged in attempting to keep the Druze out of the revolt: Yosef Nahmani, a lawyer and the Jewish Agency's representative in Tiberias, and Abba Hushi, the secretary of the Histadrut in Haifa. Nahmani had helped Ben Tzvi arrange the release of the Druze from Maghar following the killing of the Arab policeman six years previously, and he had contacts with Druze in the north-eastern Galilee, in Maghar and Hurfish. Abba Hushi had links with the Druze on Mount Carmel, particularly with the Abu Rukn family in 'Isfiya, and had become closely involved with relations between the Jews in Haifa and the Druze. He had also helped many Druze from Mount Carmel to get jobs in Haifa using his influence there as secretary of the Histadrut.[27]

In the summer of 1936, Nahmani drafted a long circular calling on the Druze not to participate in the revolt, and through his contacts in the community he arranged for it to be distributed to all the Druze villages in his region while Abba Hushi distributed a similar circular on the Carmel. Nahmani's circular dwelled on the economic benefits that the Jews had brought to Palestine, pointing out 'the difference between the prosperity of Palestine and the poverty of Trans-Jordan where [there were] no Jews'. Knowing that there were no big land-owning families amongst the Druze he talked of the exploitation of the peasants in Palestine by the landowners and presented the Jews as supporting the cause of the common man. He also appealed to the Druze as a minority, just like the Jews, who were equally at risk from an Arab majority:

> Some persons from the Druze community have participated with the bands in their attacks against the Jews . . . I was greatly amazed by this information and I did not believe it because an understanding and a friendship had existed a long time ago between the Jews and the Druze community . . . Do not forget that you are a minority in this country and many disasters and accusations against you have come from the side of our neighbours, the Arabs.[28]

This encouragement of Druze particularism was central to the Zionist strategy concerning the Druze and was further developed as the

relationship grew stronger. Abba Hushi also met with Druze notables on the Carmel to try to find out as much as he could about the mood of the Druze community concerning the revolt and to further encourage his friends there in their support of the Jews.[29]

With the exception of the few Druze already mentioned who did join the nationalist cause in 1936, the majority of Druze adopted a neutral position. They tried to stay as uninvolved as possible in the hope that the troubles would pass them by and that they would be able to carry on with their normal lives. The number of Druze who actively supported the Jews in the revolt was also small, but the passivity of the majority was interpreted as being an act of betrayal by some of the leaders of the rebel groups. The ensuing hostility from the Muslims towards the Druze, however, served merely to push some of those Druze who remained uncommitted further into the Jewish camp. In September 1936 two Druze were injured in scuffles that broke out in the villages of Kisra and Abu Snan while rebels were trying to recruit fighters for the revolt from the two villages. In December 1936 a Muslim rebel group from the village of Umm al-Zaynat, which lay just outside Haifa raided the villages of Daliyat al-Karmal and ʻIsfiya. The atmosphere of hostility between the two communities heightened as the revolt progressed. There were further attacks by Muslims on Yarka and Yanuh, and a Druze from the village of Bayt Jann was attacked and injured by rebels after giving shelter and protection to Jews from Safad. Many of those Druze who had supported the Muslims at the beginning of the revolt began to drift away, and those who remained were motivated for the most part by fear of Muslim reprisals or fear of losing their prominent positions in the community.[30]

By the autumn of 1938 the revolt was beginning to go badly for the rebels. They were facing an increasing number of military defeats and their grass-roots support was beginning to dwindle due to the economic hardships that the revolt was bringing to the populace. The British army and the Jewish authorities had begun to work together efficiently to quash it. In the face of this failure Druze passivity became even more of a focus for Muslim anger. In October and November of 1938 the rebel gang leader Yusuf Saʻid Abu Durra launched a series of bloody reprisal attacks on ʻIsfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal. Abu Durra was one of the most prominent leaders of the revolt and a member of the *Ikhwan al-Qassam* (ʻThe Brethren of

Qassam').[31] Abu Durra had worked with Druze from Mount Carmel at the Iraq Petroleum Company in Haifa and his attempts to recruit Druze to fight in the revolt had met with limited success.[32] His attacks on 'Isfiya were particularly severe, partly because the pro-Jewish activities of the Abu Rukn family were widely known and partly because 'Isfiya was not as well protected as Daliyat al-Karmal, situated close to a British army base which afforded the village some degree of protection. In the November attack on 'Isfiya several Druze were killed including Hasan Abu Rukn (the father of Labib Abu Rukn who was to be very active in promoting Druze–Jewish relations in the years to come) and Druze holy books were desecrated. The Abu Rukns sent messengers to their Jewish contacts in Haifa asking for help. The Jews in turn contacted the British army and a violent confrontation followed in which dozens of Abu Durra's men were killed. These events in 'Isfiya live on in the memories of Druze today and they did much to drive a wedge between the Druze and Muslim communities in the Haifa area.

Those Druze who suffered personally at the hands of the rebels were in the forefront of those who co-operated with the Jews in the 1948 war. Salih Khanayfis, a Druze from the mixed town of Shafa'amr, abandoned his studies at Druze theological school when his father Shaykh Hasan Khanayfis was murdered by the rebels in January 1939. Following the death of his father he became closely involved in politics and became one of the most important allies of the Jews in the Druze community. The murder of Shaykh Hasan Khanayfis had wider repercussions than invoking the anger of his son. The Shaykh had been a well-known figure in the community and news of his death and of the Jews' help spread throughout the Galilee, Syria and Lebanon.[33]

In 'Isfiya, a few months after the reprisal attacks, the Druze asked Abba Hushi if a Histadrut club could be set up in the village. Abba Hushi eagerly complied and in February 1940 Labib Abu Rukn and Salih Khanayfis (both of whom had had family members killed by the rebels) visited the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Tivon. They took with them about fifty young men from their villages. Abu Rukn was to write glowingly of the visit a few days later in a letter to Abba Hushi: 'I saw the young Druze and Jews playing and dancing like brothers.'[34]

On a local level a framework for a co-operative relationship between certain important political figures within the Jewish and Druze

community had been established during the uncertain and tumultuous period of the uprising. Progress had also been made at an international level during this time. Those involved with the Druze question in the Jewish Agency had been busy making contacts with Jabal Druze, contacts which remained, for many, the prize of co-operation with the Druze in Palestine.

Relations with Druze leaders in Syria and Lebanon, 1936–39

With the outbreak of violence in the summer of 1936 came the possibility of outside Arab involvement in the uprising. This possibility worried the leaders of the Yishuv; the Druze in Syria had a reputation for military prowess that dated back to the 1925–27 Druze rebellion against the French, and the Jewish Agency was intent on keeping the Druze in Syria and in Lebanon from supporting the rebels. Their links with the Druze in Palestine could at last (for many of those involved) prove their real usefulness – as a bridge to the Druze across the border. In the summer of 1936 Abba Hushi was instructed to send some of his Druze contacts in Palestine across the border to Lebanon and to Trans-Jordan, where many of the al-Atrash family were living in exile following their expulsion from Jabal Druze by the French for their leading role in the rebellion ten years previously.[35]

Abba Hushi sent Zayd Abu Rukn and Hasan Abu Rukn to Lebanon and Trans-Jordan respectively. In Lebanon Zayd Abu Rukn met with leading Druze figures including the Shaykh al-'Aql, Husayn Hamada, and Nazira Junbalat who had been the secular leader of the Druze community in Lebanon since the death of her husband Fu'ad Junbalat in 1921. Hasan Abu Rukn met with members of the al-Atrash family in Trans-Jordan although not with Sultan al-Atrash himself. Both men conveyed a similar message based on the circular that Nahmani had distributed that summer in the Druze villages in Palestine. The message stressed the theme of Druze unity, pointing out that support for the Palestinians would have bad repercussions for their Druze brothers in Palestine. Both messengers returned from their visit having received a verbal undertaking from those Druze they had talked with that they would do their best to remain neutral.[36]

But the Zionists were interested in achieving a more concrete undertaking from the Druze, particularly from Sultan al-Atrash. Apart

from Hasan Abu Rukn's activities, they had another avenue of contact with the al-Atrash, through a Syrian Druze called Yusuf al-'Aysami. Al-'Aysami had fought alongside Sultan al-Atrash in the Druze revolt and had been expelled from Jabal Druze along with the al-Atrash family. In 1935 he had had a meeting with Salim Alfiyya, Abba Hushi's secretary, presenting himself to the Zionists as Sultan al-Atrash's authorized representative. A few months after the outbreak of the uprising Alfiyya arranged another meeting with al-'Aysami at which Ben Tzvi, Abba Hushi and Hasan Abu Rukn were also present, in order to try to persuade al-'Aysami to use his influence with Sultan to dissuade him from supporting the Palestinians. Al-'Aysami was put on the Jewish Agency's payroll and explicitly assigned certain tasks: to prevent anyone from Jabal Druze joining rebel groups in Palestine; to inform the Jewish Agency on Palestinian leaders in Damascus and to encourage notables on Jabal Druze to make an official alliance with the Jews. Sultan, who was still in exile, was apparently interested in doing some kind of deal with the Jews for personal reasons. He believed that because of Leon Blum's rise to the premiership in France, the Jewish Agency would have enough influence in the French government to persuade it to allow him to return to his village in Jabal Druze. In 1937 he was allowed to return home, due in large part to the effort that the Jewish Agency made on his behalf.[37]

The work of Hasan Abu Rukn and al-'Aysami did pay off in military terms. The Druze from outside Palestine made no significant military contribution to the revolt, although there were movements within the Druze communities in Lebanon and Syria to get involved. Hasan Abu Rukn made a second visit to Lebanon and Syria in September 1937 and found much 'support in Syria and Lebanon for the Palestinian cause'.[38] He returned quickly to Palestine afraid for his personal safety. At the end of 1937 Asad Kanj, a Druze leader from the Jawlan in Syria, made preparations to mount a military invasion of Palestine. Through the work of al-'Aysami and Hasan Abu Rukn, who put pressure on him through local Druze contacts, he made only a symbolic incursion into the north, withdrawing almost immediately. Hasan Abu Rukn also seems to have been instrumental in dissuading similar groups from crossing the border.[39]

The Zionists were keen to cement their links, still indirect, with Sultan al-Atrash. At the end of 1937 Abba Hushi made his first visit

to Jabal Druze, and had meetings with several Druze leaders but not with Sultan al-Atrash himself. Support for the uprising in the Arab world was widespread and Sultan's level of commitment to keeping the Druze out of the revolt is not clear. Also he did not represent the entire Syrian Druze community (he had rivals even within his own family) and his situation was politically very sensitive. But Hushi and others involved in the Druze question in the Jewish Agency, were not deterred. It was around the time of Hushi's visit that the idea of transferring the Druze population in Palestine to Jabal Druze was first brought up.

The transfer plan

By the end of 1937 the leadership of the Yishuv had their first indication from the British authorities of the possibility of establishing a Jewish State. The Peel Commission, the committee of inquiry launched by the British Government as a response to the Palestinian uprising, submitted its final report in July 1937, recommending partition of Mandatory Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state (the latter to become part of Trans-Jordan) as the only possible solution to the problem in the region. It also advised that a transfer of populations be undertaken so as to avoid the inevitable problems that would ensue as a result of having Jews living in the Arab state and Arabs living in the Jewish state.[40] The proposed Jewish state was to be about 5000 square kilometres and would include the Galilee, the Jezreel Valley and the coastal plain from Acre south to Tel Aviv. The Twentieth Zionist Congress in August 1937 did not accept the Peel Commission recommendations because they were only being offered 15 per cent of the country, although continuing negotiations with the British on the basis of partition were endorsed. Despite the fact that the Peel Commission's recommendations were never carried out, they did officially establish the idea of a separate Jewish State as one of the possible solutions to the problem. And in spite of the Zionist Congress's rejection of the plan it had the private support of the leaders of the Yishuv, including Chaim Weizmann, David Ben Gurion and Moshe Sharett.

The proposed Jewish state under the terms of the recommendations of the Peel Commission included all the Druze villages in Palestine, both on Mount Carmel and in the Galilee. At the end of 1937

Aharon Cohen drafted a long report on relations with the Druze in Syria and on the importance of establishing a formal agreement with them which 'would prevent Druze from joining the Palestinians [and bring about] the possibility of marketing Jewish products in the Jabal and [cause] another division in the unity of the Arabs.'[41]

He also mentioned, in the context of the findings of the Peel Commission, the possibility of transferring the 10 000 Druze inhabitants of Palestine to Jabal Druze 'or to another place in Syria' which could come about as a result of a formal agreement being made between the leadership in the Jabal and the Jewish Agency.[42] For those Jewish officials involved, the transfer plan was part and parcel of the political machinations surrounding the Peel Commission, machinations which centred on the notion of transfer of population as an integral part of partition.[43]

Over the next year the transfer idea gained momentum. The attacks on Druze villages by rebel groups towards the end of 1938 generated a climate of fear among the Druze population which made it easier for al-'Aysami and Abba Hushi to promote the transfer plan in the Druze villages in Palestine. In August 1938 Abba Hushi had finally met with Sultan al-Atrash for the first time. Sultan was hesitant to draw up any official agreement but was apparently interested in maintaining links with the Jews. But the reprisal attacks on Druze villages shocked him.[44] Those involved in trying to get the transfer plan off the ground were fully aware of the possible beneficial effects of the reprisal attacks. At the end of 1938 Hushi wrote to al-'Aysami:

> The matter of the desecration of religious articles and the pogrom conducted in the village (against the women and the elderly) has ignited the flame of vengeance in the hearts of the Druze and if someone were to take advantage of this, it could lead to important results.[45]

With the encouragement of Hushi a delegation from 'Isfiya headed by Labib Abu Rukn met with Druze leaders in Syria to ask for help and to reiterate that they must not aid the rebel bands. Shortly after this visit Hushi made another trip to Jabal Druze and also met with Sultan. This meeting was attended by Salim Alfiyya (Hushi's secretary) and Dov Hoz, a leading figure in the Histadrut and in the Hagana. The case for transfer was put persuasively to Sultan by al-'Aysami:

> All sides will benefit: the Druze people, who will be gathered in this place; the Jewish people, who will buy their lands; and our country, where they will introduce the capital by which we will be able to save them and ourselves from ruin and poverty.[46]

Al-'Aysami had a personal interest in the plan; he was setting himself up as the main broker in the selling of Druze lands to the Jews, sales from which he was receiving a percentage. Sultan agreed to the plan but his support was still low-key: 'If our brothers have the desire to come here voluntarily and see that it would be to their benefit, we have no objection.'[47]

The question of Sultan's position on the Palestinian Druze and their links with the Jews is shadowy. The secondary sources are in conflict over the degree to which Sultan supported an alliance with the Jews. The two positions are represented at their most extreme by Gelber and Firro. Gelber seems convinced of Sultan's active involvement in and commitment to an alliance with the Jews.[48] Firro, on the other hand, doubts Sultan's involvement and mistrusts al-'Aysami's reports on his meetings with Sultan. Firro states that 'it would seem that al-'Aysami pretended he had good relations with Sultan only in order to justify his co-operation with the Zionists and to give it some legitimacy in the eyes of the Druze'.[49] Firro's more cautious position is borne out by the fact that Sultan's views were all represented through al-'Aysami's reports, or reports by other Palestinian Druze.[50] It is simply not known what position Sultan al-Atrash took, let alone if he had a consistent position at all, but it is prudent to doubt the claims that others made in his name given the fact that those very claims served to bolster their personal status.

The presence of Dov Hoz at the April 1939 meeting between Hushi and Sultan was an indication of the increasing interest of the Jewish Agency in the possibility of an official alliance with Jabal Druze. The need for allies in the Arab world in an increasingly hostile and confrontational atmosphere was becoming very important. The early contacts established between King 'Abdallah of Trans-Jordan and officials in the Jewish Agency were also a part of the Agency's policy to make as many friends as they could. At the end of 1937, Cohen spelt out the role that the Druze could play in such a policy:

> This is the way to establish spots of light and inspiration inside the dark Arab sea all around us: one in Trans-Jordan, a second in

> Lebanon, a third in Jabal Druze. Perhaps we will be able to consolidate them tomorrow into one bloc that will be inspired by us and will fortify our position. Only actions such as this will raise our image in the eyes of the major Arab governments and only they will force these rulers to take us into account as one of the principal factors in the Near East.[51]

After the April 1939 meeting the transfer plan received the official go-ahead and promise of financial backing from Chaim Weizmann, President of the Zionist Organization. Weizmann was keen on the idea; for him the voluntary emigration of 10 000 'Arabs' who 'would no doubt be followed by others' was a great opportunity for the future of Jewish settlement in the Galilee.[52] Weizmann does not seem to have really understood the specific nature of the plan or the uniqueness of the Druze situation. He had great influence in the international arena and a deep understanding of the politics and policies of the Western governments, but his knowledge of the details of Yishuv–Arab relations in Palestine was limited. Hence his support for the plan, although important, was not decisive, at least not without the backing of the prominent figures in the Political Department of the Jewish Agency.

Eliahu Epstein (later Elath), a prominent Arabist in the Political Department, was appointed to be the official in charge of the operation. As a consequence, he wrote a long report on the transfer question in May 1939. The report was detailed and well researched and served Jewish officials in years to come as a source for general information on the Druze community. It contained two parts: a comprehensive history of Druze political history, culture and religion and a section marked 'Top Secret', on the prospects for the transfer idea. Although aware of the potential benefits to the Yishuv of the plan, Epstein also pointed out the likelihood of British opposition to it, stating that they regarded the Druze as their territory and as their own link to the Druze in Jabal Druze. The British would also inevitably be against any 'increase in the size of the Yishuv in the Galilee' that would result from Jews buying up Druze lands. Also noted by Epstein is the need for French approval of the plan, in order to facilitate the transfer of the Druze into Syria.[53]

In the same summer, Epstein published an article in the *Palestine and Near East Economic Magazine*, a propaganda vehicle for the Jewish

Agency. The article was based on the research that he had done on Druze history in his official report, and its publication (which does not discuss the question of transfer as this was treated as a 'Top Secret' affair) was designed to prepare the Yishuv for the possibility of a formal alliance being made with the Druze. In his article he makes the Druze palatable as potential Zionist allies by distancing them from the surrounding Muslim culture. The article discusses the question of *taqiya* (dissimulation),[54] to show that although the Druze may *seem* indistinguishable from Muslims, this was really a Druze pretence, built into their religious beliefs as a way of surviving in a hostile Muslim environment. He even claims that this necessary dissimulation has caused the Druze to hate their neighbours:

> The centuries of this 'marrano' life of pretence and dissimulation which involved the Druze in much spiritual and material suffering, has perhaps been responsible for the growth among them of intense feelings of oppressed fanaticism and hatred for their ruling neighbours mainly, of course, the Moslems, to whose beliefs and customs they were forced to pay outward allegiance.

Having distinguished them from Muslims he then goes on to stress their traditional friendship towards the Jews and points out their lack of involvement in the Palestinian uprising, stating that

> the fortitude and independence maintained by the Druze community in the rude test [i.e., the reprisal attacks] to which it was subjected in the midst of a traditionally hostile Arab environment, merits special appreciation.

Drawing on traditional Orientalist scholarship on the Druze, Epstein uses *taqiya* to pry the Druze away from the larger Muslim culture surrounding them. And given that the Arab Nationalist movement during the revolt was predominantly Muslim, Epstein's further implication seems to be that the Druze should not even really be viewed as Arabs. In other words the Druze may seem to be like Muslims and may seem to be participating in Muslim culture but in fact they are just pretending. They are practising *taqiya*. The peril of appealing to *taqiya* in this way is plain, for it can be used to prove opposites. On the one hand, those whose interests lay in promoting

an alliance with the Druze could call upon *taqiya* to show that while the Druze may dress like Arabs, eat like Arabs and speak like Arabs they are, in fact, only pretending to be Arabs. On the other hand, those interested in scuppering an alliance with the Druze could call upon *taqiya* to show that while Druze may seem to be friendly to the Jews now, they are in fact, only pretending to be friendly.

Epstein goes one step further and compares the Druze to the Marranos, Spanish Jews whom the Inquisition forced to convert to Christianity but who secretly preserved their Jewish faith and practice. Epstein's argument thus comes full circle: the Druze are not only unlike the Muslim Arabs, they are like the Jews, since their experience of persecution (and their subsequent dissimulation) at the hand of a brutish majority is analogous to that of the Jews. In 1939, in the aftermath of a bloody revolt when Jewish feelings of fear and hostility were particularly strong, Epstein's appeals to a sense of shared history between Druze and Jews would have had a powerful effect.[55]

There was however disagreement within the Agency over the policy towards the Druze. Eliahu Sasson, Director of the Arab Division of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, was opposed to an official agreement with the Druze in Jabal Druze. He was busy cultivating links with the Nationalist Bloc in Syria using his old contacts in the *Istiqlal* party. Sasson was a Syrian Jew who had been involved with the nationalist movement in Syria before his move to Palestine in 1927. He was interested in making an agreement with Jamil Mardam, the leader of the Nationalist Bloc, and he was afraid that any links between the Jews and the Druze would be seen by Mardam as a stab in the back. He was adamant that links in the Arab world should be with governments and not with minorities: 'The Syrian leaders will regard such a step taken behind their backs as Zionist collusion . . . they would by no means believe our good intentions'.[56]

Nor was Sharett particularly enthusiastic about the plan. He was a cautious man and the proposal seemed to him over-ambitious and expensive. He also worried about the reaction of the nationalist movement in Syria and the reaction of the French. Like Sasson, Sharett preferred that the relationship be kept at the level of friendly contacts between individuals rather than ratcheted up to a more official level. This lukewarm response angered Hushi, who had made many promises to his Druze friends on Mount Carmel as a result of the transfer plan. Hushi could not move ahead effectively with the

plan without the full backing of the top officials in the Jewish Agency, mainly because he needed a considerable amount of money to buy the land from the Druze who were willing to move. He also needed money to pay al-ʻAysami and others who were involved in the logistics of carrying out the plan. The Agency was running on a tight budget and was unwilling to hand over large amounts of money to a project which did not have its full and unreserved backing. Hushi believed that this lack of funds was the only thing holding back the successful implementation of the transfer. In July 1939 he wrote to Epstein: 'The money has not yet arrived. Because of your strange attitude, the contacts will be disrupted and the scheme will collapse. The responsibility will rest with you!'[57]

Lack of financial backing was not the only obstacle to the implementation of the transfer plan. The revolt was effectively over by the autumn of 1939 and there were signs of a rapprochement between the Muslim and Druze communities in Palestine. A committee which included Druze, Muslim and Christian representatives, had been set up to try to address the problem of the conflict between the different religious communities; and a delegation from Jabal Druze had arrived in Palestine to negotiate a *sulha* (reconciliation) between the Druze in Shafaʻamr and the Muslim rebels (over the murder of Shaykh Khanayfis) in January 1939. The *sulha* was successfully negotiated and punitive damages were paid by Khanayfis's murderers to his family.[58] Alfiyya had worked hard for the transfer plan and was furious at these signs of reconciliation between the Muslim and Druze communities. He wrote in a report at the end of December 1939 that the Muslims, 'unable to deal with the Druze by force of arms [are attempting] to defeat them by a peace through the influence of their leaders in the Jabals'.[59]

The British, aware of Hushi's activities, were disapproving and they expressed their dissatisfaction at Abba Hushi's relations with Labib Abu Rukn and Salih Khanayfis.[60] They supported the rapprochement as a way of making sure there was not a mass movement of Druze from Palestine to Jabal Druze. With the additional difficulties in communications between the Jabal and Palestine caused by the outbreak of war in September 1939, the transfer plan was effectively put on ice. Al-ʻAysami, however, continued to try to sell Druze land to the Jews.

War and the Axis threat, 1939–41

Despite the failure of the transfer plan, the contacts between the Druze and the Jewish Agency continued.[61] At the beginning of 1940, Asad Kanj, a prominent political figure from one of the most powerful Druze families on Mount Hermon, approached the Agency saying that he had been asked by the British to act in their service, but that he was more interested in working with the Agency to develop a combined defence plan between the Jewish settlements in the north and the Druze villages. Kanj had met Hushi during the uprising. At that time Hushi persuaded Kanj to withdraw a rebel group which he had led into Palestine before it saw any serious action. Money seems to have played a part in Kanj's motivation in approaching the Agency; he had apparently been promised payment by them for his actions during the uprising and had never received it.[62] The Agency was interested in pursuing links with the Druze on Mount Hermon. The outbreak of the Second World War had brought a new urgency to the relationship between the Jews and the Druze living on the border between Syria and Palestine. This was intensified after the Nazi occupation of France in July 1940 when Syria came under Vichy control.

During the course of 1940 Hushi and Kanj met several times and discussed many issues. One of the most important issues for the Agency was the possibility that Kanj might be able to help procure arms from Syria for the Hagana. Ben Tzvi was particularly interested in developing the links with Kanj and the rest of the Druze community. In August 1940 he wrote to Sharett:

> In light of the volatile situation in Syria and the possibilities of uprising and attack by the Arabs against us in Palestine and the possibilities of conflicts between the parties and different communities in Syria itself it is important to pinpoint what the shared interests are between us and the Druze.[63]

Sharett agreed to call an Agency meeting on the subject, and a meeting with Yosef Nahmani and Abba Hushi was held, despite Agency voices that protested against devoting too much time to discussing the Druze question before certain preliminaries had been cleared up.[64] Bernard Joseph (later Dov Yosef) was a leading figure in the Jewish

Agency and eventually became Minister of Supply and Rationing in the first Israeli government. Joseph was one of those concerned that the availability of financial backing for the plan should be established before any far-reaching decisions were made. In August he wrote to Sharett;

> I think that before holding a larger meeting we should have a limited discussion of the Political Department with Abba Hushi . . . . We should postpone a [larger] meeting until we find out whether the resources that we have a chance to get will really be given to us.[65]

Surprisingly, given his earlier reluctance to involve the Agency in negotiations with the Druze, Sasson supported Ben Tzvi's position. He agreed that a meeting should be convened and that Abba Hushi 'should prepare suggestions for activities among the Druze inside the country and outside'.[66]

Sasson's contacts with the National Bloc in Syria had previously made him reluctant to get involved with the Druze lest this be seen as a betrayal by those he was in contact with. The effective termination of these contacts as a result of the new Vichy rule in Syria was perhaps one reason why he now felt freer to support a policy of active co-operation with the Druze. In any event, by the end of 1940, the Druze issue was back on the agenda of the Jewish Agency, in spite of the failure of the transfer plan.

During the period of Vichy rule in Syria there was unprecedented contact between the Jewish Agency and the British Secret Services. The threat posed by the Axis powers was very real in the wake of the change of administration in Syria and the bombing of Haifa and Tel Aviv by Italian planes in July 1940. Both sides recognized the need for co-operation in the face of a possible renewed Arab uprising with Axis support.

One major player in this game was Reuven Zaslani (later Reuven Shiloah), an accomplished Arabist who was in charge of intelligence in the Political Department of the Agency. Zaslani was the liaison between the Agency and British military intelligence and had many contacts there, particularly with the Special Operations Executive set up by Churchill in July 1940.[67] The question of the Druze fell into this area of Jewish–British co-operation. The British had been cut off from many of their French intelligence contacts in Syria, and were

willing to give financial backing to Druze–Jewish co-operation in return for access to the information that Druze contacts were passing to their Jewish controls. In effect, Druze like al-'Aysami and Kanj were, for a short time, being paid by the British to spy for the Jewish Agency. In the late summer of 1940, the British gave 5000 PL to the Jewish Agency for its activities with the Druze, 750PL of which was to be paid to Kanj, al-'Aysami and Zayd al-Atrash, Sultan's brother.[68]

The al-Atrash family in Jabal Druze were unhappy with Vichy rule and there was some movement towards starting secret negotiations with King 'Abdallah to annex Jabal Druze to Trans-Jordan and thereby bring it under British control.[69] Consequently, they were looking for ways to negotiate with the British and were hoping to be able to do so through their links with the Jews. The British, for their part, were eager to get Druze support in the event of an Allied invasion of Syria and also keen to use the Jews as a go-between. Zaslani arranged for certain members of the Special Operations Executive to sit in on meetings held at the border between Hushi and representatives of the al-Atrash family. The al-Atrash wanted to arrange a meeting between Sultan and a top British general. The Jews were reluctant, but the Allied conquest of Syria was ultimately in their interest, so with a certain degree of pushing on the part of Dov Hoz, it was agreed that a meeting should be set up and organized by him. The meeting never occurred due to Hoz's death at the end of 1940 and to reports which the Agency was receiving that the British were also attempting to reach the Druze through their contacts with them in the Arab Legion. This put Abba Hushi in an awkward position *vis-à-vis* his contacts on the Jabal; again he felt that he had been let down by the Agency. In March 1941 he wrote to the Political Department:

> Our friends the al-Atrash people are frustrated over the break in contact with us and unfulfilled promises from our side and they find themselves in a confusing situation. On the one hand there is enormous pressure on them from the French authorities who require loyalty from them to Vichy and on the other hand we have stopped communicating with them.[70]

The successful Allied conquest of Syria in June 1941 and the installation of the Free French government removed the urgency of

negotiations with the Druze. The al-Atrash family were furious that the British had not stayed in Syria but had given it back to the French. A later intelligence report based on a meeting with al-‘Aysami chronicled the Druze position in the wake of the Allied success:

> They are not satisfied with the French, not even for a short while. The thing they want most is American intervention since they have no imperial goals. If this is impossible, they would prefer British rule since there is no other alternative. They are not satisfied with the British who before the invasion of Syria promised them a lot but now claim that it is not in their hands but in the hands of the French. There is however one understanding: any arrangement in the East, namely in Syria, Trans-Jordan and Palestine will have to take into account the existence and opinions of the Jews.[71]

From their point of view there was not much difference between a Vichy or Free French government. For the Jewish Agency there was a big difference; Sasson, in particular, was eager to get on good terms with General Catroux, the representative of the Free French government. He was not going to allow Druze disgruntlement to get in the way of relations with the government in Syria. This was a recurring theme in Sasson's position on relations with minorities; they were beneficial only if they did not take the place of, or jeopardize, the much more important business of cultivating links with governments. Meetings did still continue between Hushi and the Druze, and Sasson even took al-‘Aysami on a tour of the Hebrew University and the Hadassa Hospital, but ties with the Druze at an official level had dwindled in importance with the end of Vichy control in Syria.

Shai and the question of the Druze

Hushi maintained his links with al-‘Aysami, who had not given up on the transfer plan, but the Agency was becoming increasingly frustrated at putting money into Hushi's activities without seeing any concrete benefit arising from them. There was a feeling in the Agency that Hushi should be made to account for the money that he was spending. In September 1942 Sasson wrote to Hushi:

> There is no chance that the budget for activities amongst the Druze will increase next year. Let me say that this is partly your fault, since you do not send reports or details on your activities in this field. It is clear to all of us that you do a lot, but there is a need for written reports, not for us but for the people in management. Do me and the cause a favour and write every month at least a short report on your activities.

At the same time the money being allocated to Hushi became more and more sporadic, and Hushi was unable to fulfil promises that he was making to al-ʻAysami and others which in turn was weakening his credibility in the eyes of his Druze contacts.[72]

Hushi's problems with the Agency came, not entirely coincidentally, a few months after the official establishment of the Sherut Yedi'ot, ('Information Service') the pre-state secret service. The Sherut Yedi'ot or Shai, the acronym by which it was known, was divided into three sections: the internal department which dealt with the Jewish population, the political department which dealt with relations with the British government and the army, and the Arab department which was headed by Ezra Danin and which dealt mainly with the local Arab population.

Danin, a citrus farmer from Jaffa, had many contacts in the Arab community and had been sending in intelligence reports to the Hagana since the days of the revolt. He was an excellent Arabic speaker and was generally regarded as one of the most expert working in the Arab field. He and Reuven Zaslani were friends and often worked together, thereby providing an important link between the intelligence activities of the Hagana and the Jewish Agency.

Among Danin's most able and prominent colleagues in the Arab Department of Shai were Yaʻcov Shimʻoni and Yehoshua ('Josh') Palmon. Shimʻoni was a German intellectual who had arrived in Palestine in 1936. He had taught himself Arabic and was a scholar of Arab and Islamic history. He organized the central office of Shai and more than anyone else was responsible for the efficiency and precision with which the Arab Department was run in its early days. Palmon was also an excellent Arabist and was taken on for his experience in the field. During the revolt he had been the Hagana's intelligence contact at the Palestine Potash Company works at the southern end of the Dead Sea. He knew a great deal about the Beduin tribes in the

area and he also had field experience in Hebron and the surrounding villages. Danin, Shim'oni and Palmon were to be central players in the Druze question during the crucial days of the 1948 War.[73]

Within the jurisdiction of the Arab Department of Shai there was a designated Druze section to which Hushi had supplied information because of his experience and wide contacts in the community. But Hushi became accountable to Shai rather than to the Political Department of the Agency. Others such as Palmon now took an interest in the Druze question, and Hushi's centrality in Druze–Jewish relations became less marked as Shai's activities became more widespread. As agents of Shai became more involved with Druze affairs they became increasingly unhappy with Hushi's handling of certain matters. The promises he made to many Druze families when the transfer plan was on the table had not been fulfilled and this caused a dangerous amount of bad feeling towards the Jews in general. Some Druze even tried to convince the Jewish Agency to set up a quasi-official judicial inquiry into Hushi's unfulfilled promises. They had little success, but the Arab Department of Shai was concerned about the decline in relations that this indicated. An intelligence report in the spring of 1944 stated:

> It seems that it is possible by way of financial arrangement to save Abba Hushi's honour and our honour. Now is the time to settle the affair – it would be very bad if we have to sort this out at a time of disturbances.

A few influential Druze, however, made it clear to Shai agents that they did not regard Hushi as the only acceptable conduit to the Jews, and that their friendship with him had not been personal so much as representative of their feelings towards the Yishuv as a whole. The most prominent of these were Salih Khanayfis from Shafa'amr and Labib Abu Rukn. Relatives of both had been killed by Muslim rebels during the revolt. This pair started to meet with Shai agents and quickly became the lynchpins of Shai's campaign in the Druze community.[74]

The transfer plan revisited

Hushi was aware of his loss of influence in 'Isfiya and Shafa'amr and of the fact that Khanayfis and Abu Rukn preferred to deal directly

with Shai. He admitted this in a letter he wrote to Bernard Joseph at the beginning of 1944, although he was eager to stress that he still had strong contacts in Jabal Druze:

> The two villages with which my contacts have become weaker are ‘Isfiya and Shafa‘amr. Due to the tightening of the budget I could not fulfil their requests, and the link has broken down. I want to emphasize that the contacts between the leadership of the Druze community and the people in Jabal Druze are very strong . . . the man who maintains the contact between me and Sultan Pasha al-Atrash and his brother in Jabal Druze is Yusuf al-‘Aysami. He has been in touch with me for years. The contact is maintained as far as possible by correspondence, and in the last year [1943] he visited me twice.

Hushi went on to tell Joseph that al-‘Aysami was still eager to implement the aborted transfer plan and wanted Hushi to visit Jabal Druze. Still bitter from his previous exchanges with the Agency over money, Hushi complained that he could not possibly do this without the appropriate funding:

> ‘Aysami thinks that I should visit Jabal Druze again and meet with Sultan Pasha al-Atrash and other notables. I would agree with this if it were not for the fact that it would cost a lot of money, since I cannot go there empty-handed. Hence I have not fulfilled his request. I was offered by some elements, both in the country and in Jabal Druze, to contact the leaders of the Druze in Lebanon, but in the current situation (again to do with money) I cannot do this.[75]

Joseph and certain others in the Political Department were not unwilling to reopen the question of the transfer plan. With the war in Europe and the Middle East turning in the Allied direction, and the possibility of an Axis occupation of Palestine seeming increasingly remote, the leadership of the Yishuv was beginning to look towards its future place in the Middle East. The possibility of an alliance with the leadership in Jabal Druze with the added benefit of Druze land in the Galilee being available for Jews to buy was still attractive. But the Political Department was unhappy with the idea of Hushi being the main person responsible for the negotiations.

They were becoming increasingly interested in cultivating the friendship of the Maronite community in Lebanon and Hushi's perspective was deemed to be too narrow to make him an effective operator.[76]

Eliahu Epstein was particularly concerned about Hushi's qualifications for the job. In February 1944 he wrote to Joseph:

> With all due respect to Abba Hushi I do not find it helpful to make him responsible for the question of the Druze in Jabal Druze. The Druze issue is inseparable from other issues regarding our relations with various circles in Syria and our activities there. A separate attention to the Druze or to any other branch of activity may sometimes be more harmful than helpful if it is not part of a general plan of operations in that country. . . . I think that we cannot entrust such a mission to a man who is not in the general current of affairs in Syria. His activities may be helpful in the Druze issue but might be much more harmful in other areas.[77]

Sasson was equally unenthusiastic about Hushi's role in the matter. He doubted what he called Hushi's 'optimism' about the benefits of a Jewish–Druze alliance. Sasson was also suspicious of al-'Aysami's motives and legitimacy as a representative of Sultan al-Atrash and it was agreed that he and Danin should meet with al-'Aysami themselves. The decision that this meeting should occur was taken at a joint meeting of the Political Department and the National Fund at the end of June, indicating that the Fund was willing to start refinancing links with the Druze.[78]

The meeting with al-'Aysami took place in Haifa at the end of July. Al-'Aysami's plan for the transfer of population had changed considerably from when it was first mooted in the late 1930s. The area to which the Palestinian Druze were to move had changed from Jabal Druze to an area inside Trans-Jordan, east of Mafraq, between the Syrian border and the Iraqi pipeline. This area had been part of Jabal Druze before the British and the French drew the border between Syria and Trans-Jordan whereupon the land became part of Trans-Jordan. Apparently local Beduin tribes were challenging the Druze over ownership of the land there and the al-Atrash family was eager to reconfirm that the area belonged to the Druze. Al-'Aysami wanted to start the transfer gradually, establishing 'one or two modern villages as an example' while at the same time 'engaging in propaganda

activities among the Druze in Palestine'. He suggested that the work should be carried out by Druze so as to avoid any suspicion, but funded by the National Fund. In return for this money, the Fund would receive all the abandoned Druze land in Palestine. It was an ambitious plan and doubts about its feasibility emerged from the Jewish side. A report of a preliminary meeting held the week before between the Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency and al-'Aysami, expresses grave doubts about the suitability of the new land that the Palestinian Druze were supposed to settle:

> It is impossible to imagine that the conditions in the region will facilitate a diverse agriculture with no artificial irrigation . . . . From an agricultural point of view it seems to us dubious for settlement of Druze from Palestine. It is doubtful whether it will attract Palestinian Druze who are used to a completely different climate.

The report stresses the importance of sending a Jewish team to the area to investigate the conditions of: 'land ownership, methods of cultivation in the settlements there, and the possibilities for finding and using water'.[79]

In spite of these reservations a preliminary agreement was drawn up which stated that al-'Aysami would return to Jabal Druze and prepare for the visit of a Jewish mission to explore the possibilities of the plan. It also stipulated that al-'Aysami should be ready to come to Palestine at any time that he was required in order to help with 'arrangements' with the Druze in Palestine. For his services it was agreed that he would be paid 15PL a month. Surprisingly, the report does not question al-'Aysami's legitimacy as Sultan's representative, despite his insistence that the Jewish mission must not visit Sultan but should be hosted and managed by al-'Aysami. The reason he gave was that 'it would cost a lot of money in presents' to make an official visit to Sultan. It seems more likely that al-'Aysami was himself unsure of Sultan's support and concerned that if this was to become obvious to the Jewish Agency, it could discredit him in their eyes. The money al-'Aysami was in a position to make as the main broker of the sale of Druze land to the Jews, not to mention the salary that he was to receive from the Agency, seems to have been a considerable incentive in ensuring that the negotiations not be derailed. In fact he was quite forthcoming about this during the meeting:

> Later in our talk Yusuf did not conceal that he is not providing us with his services just for God's sake. He hopes to receive considerable material gain from this affair. At least he will secure the position of his family and its future for decades. But he is a modest man and will be a faithful and committed servant.[80]

It appears that the visit to the Jabal never took place. The reasons for this are not clear. But the political circumstances on the ground, particularly in Palestine, had changed a great deal from the period in which the idea of a transfer of population was first mooted. The Palestinian Druze had supported the plan in 1938–39 primarily because of the fear created by the Muslim rebel gangs' revenge attacks, attacks which had themselves come as a result of the neutral position most Druze took in the revolt. In 1944–45 this threat no longer existed. In addition those Druze who had in fact been willing to sell up and move, and then been disappointed, were unwilling to commit themselves again to a plan which had, in their eyes, already failed. It is likely that al-'Aysami found little enthusiasm from Palestinian Druze for the plan, and without their co-operation there could be no future for it, because al-'Aysami knew that the Jewish commitment to it rested on the possibility of acquiring more land in the Galilee for Jews to settle.

From an international perspective the notion of settling Druze in Trans-Jordan, which would need the approval of the British, was not likely to be well received. In 1939 the British had made it clear that they were vehemently opposed to such a notion. There also seems to have been a certain amount of disagreement on the Jewish side over the feasibility of the plan and the degree to which it was worth committing funds to. In June 1945, the National Fund made a unilateral decision to stop paying al-'Aysami's salary. The Political Department was furious, not so much because this meant the end of the transfer plan, but because the Fund had made the decision without informing them when the original agreement to go ahead and pay for the plan and al-'Aysami's activities had been a joint one, taken by the Political Department and the Fund. In July, Sasson wrote to the management of the Fund:

> If for some reason you have decided to cancel this agreement and to wash your hands of any activity among the Druze in the country

> and in neighbouring countries, you should have notified us upon making this decision, and given us a period of one or two months in order to notify Yusuf ʻA. and all our people who are in contact with him and with the members of his community.[81]

By the end of 1945 the transfer plan seems finally to have died. It had never really been much more than an idea. At the end of the 1930s it enjoyed some momentum on the ground but it never received the official backing it needed from either the Jewish Agency or Sultan al-Atrash. In the mid-1940s the Jewish Agency seemed readier to make a commitment to it but the momentum on the ground had been lost and Sultan's position was as unclear then as it had been before. Al-ʻAysami's personal commitment to it and his long-standing contact with Abba Hushi seems to have had more to do with keeping it afloat than anything else. But its importance does not lie in whether or not it was carried out, or in whether or not it was politically feasible, but in the fact that it was, for two short periods, a serious issue under discussion in the Jewish Agency. It set a precedent for negotiations with Druze across the border. It triggered a certain amount of research and study of the Druze and their history in the Middle East, such as Epstein's long report in 1939, and it also led to trips by Jewish representatives to Jabal Druze, and trips by Druze to Jewish Palestine. It was one of the central components of the relationship between the Druze and the Jews during the period of the Mandate, a relationship which was to be utilized in the war that followed.

The Druze in Lebanon

The question of the Druze in Lebanon and the attitude of the Jewish Agency towards them raises some interesting points. There is very little material in the archives which touches on the Lebanese Druze and the part that they played (if any) in the history of the Druze–Jewish relationship. Some Lebanese Druze had been involved in the Palestinian uprising as part of the overall Druze contingent that had taken a nationalist pro-Arab position, as seen through the activities of individuals such as Hani Abu Muslih in Haifa.[82] At the end of 1944 the Political Department received an apparently unsolicited report on the Druze in the Shuf mountains in Lebanon and their attitude

towards the Jews. It was written by a Jewish researcher and historian who was visiting the region from Kibbutz Gnegar: 'to investigate, through existing remnants and local traditions, the history of Jewish settlements which existed in that region'.

On completing his research and returning to Palestine he sent a long report to the Political Department detailing what he saw and maintaining that it was potentially useful information on the Druze attitude towards the Jews. During his visit he was surprised by the degree of support that he found in the Druze community for the Jewish cause:

> In most of the villages I heard overt offers to buy lands, and although I kept emphasizing that I was not a trader and that I am concerned only with *tarikh* [history] my hosts repeated their offers several times, even when I tried to go back to the subject of my interest.

He goes on to give examples of the enthusiasm that he found, quoting from local Druze:

> 'Ayn Zalta. Shaykh Nasif al-'Id, 35, a member of the *baladiyya* [village council]: 'Every village is ready to give you a letter saying that we want Jews to come and settle here. Indeed, there are Lebanese who oppose it (namely Christians and Muslims) but the Druze will support the Jews since they are rich and their ways, like those of the Americans, are economic and not political.'
>
> Bitalun. The Mukhtar, Yusuf Effendi Hasan: 'We want the Jews to come here because we hate the Maronites and they hate you. Palestinian Jews are coming to me, not as tourists, but because they are buying land in Lebanon.'[83]

The archives do not tell us how this report was received or whether it was acted on in any way. But recent scholarship has shown that the Jewish Agency was concentrating on cultivating links with the Maronites in Lebanon at this time.[84] The Maronites were a more powerful political force in Lebanon and as such were considered a more useful ally than the Druze. That each alliance must be seen in its own context seems to have been a clear element of Jewish policy towards the minorities. The Druze on Jabal Druze were worth doing

business with because they represented a significant political force in Syrian politics. In Lebanon the Maronites filled this role, and if supporting the Maronites in Lebanon involved antagonizing the Druze community there because of the historic rivalry between the two communities, it was a price worth paying.[85]

From war to war, 1945–47

In the summer of 1945, with the war in Europe over, the atmosphere in Palestine became very tense. The short-lived period of co-operation between the Jews and the British, sustained by the fact that they had a common enemy in Nazism, was over. The question of admitting Jewish refugees from war-torn Europe into Palestine became a focus of tension, not only between the Jewish Agency and the British but also between the British and the Americans. Truman's famous request, made in August 1945, that 100 000 Jewish refugees be admitted into Palestine was rejected by the British who feared that it would open the floodgates of immigration to Palestine, thereby repudiating the British policy of only allowing in the small number of Jewish refugees stipulated in the White Paper of 1939.

With the creation in early 1946 of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry the question of the future of the Jewish homeland in Palestine was also back on the agenda. There was a feeling of imminent change within the Jewish Agency. Britain was greatly weakened by the war and indebted to the Americans who were showing signs of taking a pro-Jewish position. Britain could not remain in Palestine forever. By 1946 the Jewish Agency was receiving intelligence reports that there were signs of a renewal of the Palestinian uprising. This, coupled with the granting in 1946 of independence to Syria and Jordan by France and Britain respectively, increased the fear in the leadership of the Yishuv of the possibility of war between the Arabs and the Jews.

Those in the Jewish Agency and Shai involved in Druze affairs started to put out feelers into the Druze community to see if they could rely on Druze neutrality in the event of a renewal of the Palestinian uprising, or in the event of a full-scale war between the Jews and the neighbouring Arab states. In March 1946 Shim'oni and Sasson met with Salih Khanayfis and Labib Abu Rukn in order to try to ensure Druze support in the event of war. Shim'oni wrote to Joseph:

> The general idea of our work, beyond getting information and the occasional piece of land, is that in the event of any fighting between the Arabs and the Jews – political and economic, but especially military – the Druze will take a neutral stance or even a friendly stance towards the Jews. Our friends among the Druze are spreading this opinion among their brothers. In this meeting we did not limit ourselves to 'spreading the opinion' and [we made it clear] that we wanted to see real acts.

It was agreed that Khanayfis and Abu Rukn should tour the Druze villages and make contact with the Shaykhs and heads of families within the villages to try to ensure their support. It was also agreed that they would attempt to establish an 'association' that would have as one of its tenets that the Druze 'take a position of neutrality in the event of an Arab–Jewish conflict'.[86]

There is no evidence in the archival sources that this plan was ever realized. Although Khanayfis and Abu Rukn tried to muster support for some kind of official agreement amongst the leaders of the Druze community, they were not able to produce any evidence solid enough for Sasson and Shim'oni to feel completely confident of Druze neutrality. One intelligence report claimed that 'the Druze refused to respond to these people [Khanayfis and Abu Rukn] due to the fact that they are suspected of having links with the Jews'.[87]

The Zionists did not have any more success in their attempts to secure a promise of support from the Syrian Druze. Relations between the Syrian Druze and the Syrian government were rocky in the days after Syrian independence.[88] The Druze felt that they had been ignored in the division of power in the new state and the al-Atrash family in particular were involved in negotiations with King 'Abdallah over the possible annexation of Jabal Druze to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which gained formal independence in 1946. They were simply not interested, at that moment, in doing business with the Jewish Agency. Anti-Zionist emotions had intensified in the post-war Arab world. The newly independent states, at least publicly, were voicing their implacable opposition to Zionism. It was not a period in which the Druze in Syria would have wanted to seem too friendly with the Jewish Agency.[89]

In February 1947 Britain, tired of trying to achieve a solution to the problem in Palestine between two uncompromising parties, and

eager to rid herself of responsibility for Palestine's future, announced her decision to refer the question of Palestine to the United Nations. Britain was washing her hands of the problem and a British withdrawal was inevitable. The spectre of British withdrawal and the arrival, in July 1947, of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine charged with the task of issuing a definitive recommendation on the future of Palestine, contributed to the explosive atmosphere of tension between Arabs and Jews in Palestine.

In spite of the fact that no unified or coherent Druze response emerged with regard to the attempts by Khanayfis and Abu Rukn to establish an official policy of friendship towards the Jews, the Druze community did not hold an official pro-Muslim position either, although individual Druze were active in the Muslim nationalist camp. Outbreaks of tension between the Druze and Muslim communities erupted in November 1947, in the run-up to the civil war in Palestine. In February threatening letters were sent to Khanayfis and Abu Rukn over the alleged sale of Druze land to the National Fund. Both men were called upon to attend a meeting of the Muslim Council in Haifa 'for an investigation into the sale of land to the Jews'. Upon hearing of these threats Sultan al-Atrash was quick to respond. He sent emissaries to Palestine to look into the matter, and to warn Shaykh Nimr al-Khatib, the letter-writer and a prominent Muslim nationalist in Haifa, that 'if something happens to the Druze he and the Muslim Council would be held responsible'.[90]

A few months later, in July 1947, the Hebrew daily *Davar* ran an article entitled 'The Authorities Must Protect the Minorities Say the Druze in Haifa'. The article reported on the violent clashes between Muslims and Druze that had resulted from Muslim suspicions of Druze collaboration with the Jews. A few days later Shai received intelligence stating that members of the Muslim Council in Haifa visited Druze villages 'in order to extract promises from the Druze villagers not to sell their land to the Jews'. The report concludes with the reassurance that 'the visit of the members of the Muslim Council made no impression on the Druze, and their contacts with the National Fund continue'.[91]

As the region stood on the brink of war the Druze position towards the conflict reflected the chaos and changing nature of the overall political situation in Palestine in the summer and early autumn of 1947. Politically active Druze were divided between those who

believed that the future of the Druze community lay in an alliance with the Jews (these were particularly strong in ʻIsfiya, Daliyat al-Karmal and Shafaʻamr) and those who felt that it was safer to follow the tide of Arab nationalist feeling, particularly in view of the renewed threat of reprisal attacks. The onset of war in November 1947 set off a series of events that led incrementally to a strengthening of the pro-Jewish Druze leadership. This would have been impossible without the contacts and friendships forged between the Yishuv and the Druze during the Mandate period.

2
The Druze and the Jews in the Civil War, November 1947–May 1948

On 29 November 1947 the Partition Resolution was adopted at the United Nations, calling for the creation of two states in Mandatory Palestine, one Arab and one Jewish. The Jews accepted the partition plan but the Arabs rejected it. The passage of the resolution thus marked the beginning of the civil war between Jews and Arabs that was to last until the British withdrawal and declaration of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948 and the invasion of the Arab armies on the following day. This chapter will be concerned exclusively with the civil war.[1]

From partition to the arrival of the Druze battalion in Palestine

In the early stages of the civil war the leaders of the Druze community did not express a clear and well-defined pro-Jewish position. Their general reaction to the increasingly violent events was to withdraw and observe. However, those individual Druze who had established links with the Jews during the Mandate were eager to sustain the friendship in the dangerous days of late 1947 and early 1948.[2] These individuals came mainly from Daliyat al-Karmal, ʻIsfiya, and Shafaʻamr. According to the documentary evidence, the Druze villages in the western Galilee were relatively uninvolved in the growing Jewish–Druze relationship during the period of the civil war.[3] The two Druze names which come up most in the documents for this period

are Labib Abu Rukn of ‘Isfiya and Salih Khanayfis of Shafa‘amr.[4] Family members of both men had been killed by the rebel gangs during the 1936–39 revolt, and both were unequivocally anti-Muslim and pro-Jewish.[5]

On the Jewish side there continued to be an active policy of fostering links with the Druze. This policy was spearheaded by Geura Zayd and Yehoshua Palmon, both senior officers in Shai. The importance of good relations between the Druze in Palestine and the Jewish Agency was not underestimated by the Jewish side, since many of those involved in the Druze question believed that a link with prominent Druze in Palestine would in turn facilitate good relations with Sultan al-Atrash on Jabal Druze. The Jews did not want Sultan al-Atrash as an enemy. The attitude that ‘my enemy's enemy is my friend’ guided Jewish policy.[6]

During December 1947 the hostilities between Arabs and Jews intensified. Arabs attacked a convoy travelling to the Etzion Bloc, resulting in the deaths of ten Jews, and Jews bombed Arab markets in Jerusalem, Jaffa and some villages in the vicinity of Haifa, resulting in the deaths of dozens of Arabs. Thirty-nine Jewish workers at the oil refinery in Haifa were also massacred during this month, an event which served to inflame hostilities in the north.[7]

With the escalating violence the pressure increased on the Druze community to participate in what was being presented as the united struggle of the Arab community against the Jews. A Hagana report dated 21 December 1947 describes a conversation with a Druze informer from Daliyat al-Karmal named ‘Abdallah ‘Abud who worked at that time for a local Jewish construction company: ‘The informer tells us that recently the pressure has increased on the Druze to be activists and within the Druze community in Daliyat al-Karmal a group has formed which identifies with the Arab cause.’[8] The report goes on to mention a dispute between the Muslim village of Balad al-Shaykh and the Druze villages of ‘Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal over changing the bus route between the two Druze villages and Haifa. The Arab National Committee members in Balad al-Shaykh apparently wanted the bus line to be diverted through Umm al-Zaynat and Wadi Milh so that Arab gangs could carry out attacks on Jewish traffic travelling to Kibbutz Beit Oren nearby. The Druze backed down in the face of Muslim pressure and the bus route was altered to go the long way around. There is no evidence, however,

that any Druze actively participated in attacks on Jews during this period: 'Druze of the villages of 'Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal did not agree to the request of the Arab authorities to attack the Jewish points in their vicinity.'[9]

By the middle of December some indications began surfacing of the attitude of the Druze on Jabal Druze towards the civil war in Palestine. An article on 19 December in *Jabal*, a Druze newspaper, reported on Fawzi al-Qawuqji's visit to Jabal Druze and on his attempt to recruit Druze soldiers for the then-nascent Arab Liberation Army, which Qawuqji was to command. A recruitment call sent out to all the provinces in Syria two weeks previously had met with no response from Jabal Druze and Qawuqji was brought in specially as part of a campaign to recruit Druze. Despite the efforts of the Governor of Jabal Druze nobody came out to greet Qawuqji upon his arrival and schoolchildren and government officials had to be dragged out to form a suitable reception committee. According to the article Qawuqji gave a rousing speech: 'When I see the faces of the Druze here I am assured of victory in Palestine . . . this is a battle in which the fate of the aggressive Jews will be decided exactly as it was decided three thousand years ago by Nebuchadnezzer.' He also talked of the looting to be had in Palestine in an attempt to encourage people to join.[10] Despite these efforts the response was feeble. A British Intelligence report stated that:

> Qawuqji is reported unsatisfied with the support so far received and appears discouraged. His recruiting trip to Jabal Druze is reported a failure . . . .The military attaché comments: Jihad needs a shot in the arm to develop beyond the status of unorganized gang warfare.[11]

Sultan al-Atrash's own attitude was announced during a visit to several Druze villages in Palestine in early January 1948 by Kamal ibn Asad al-Kanj, a prominent Druze from Majd al-Shams on Mount Hermon (today part of the Golan Heights) who had close ties to the al-Atrash family. He informed the villagers that Sultan al-Atrash was taking a neutral position *vis-à-vis* the hostilities between the Palestinian and Jewish communities and expected them to do the same. A Hagana report states that the reason for this policy of neutrality was

a combination of Sultan's friendship with King 'Abdallah of Jordan and his hostility to the Syrian government and to its anti-Jewish position.[12] The stated purpose of al-Kanj's visit, to convey the feelings of Sultan al-Atrash to the leaders of the Druze community in Palestine, did not concur with an official explanation of his visit which appeared in the newspaper *al-Dunya* on 12 January 1948. In the article al-Kanj was reported to be consulting with local Druze leaders in order to ascertain the community's capacity to fight as part of a united Arab front against the Jews. The article even quotes Kanj as saying:

> I have visited the Druze whose number is up to 17,000 people. From them a force of 4000–4500 fighters can be established but they are today without weapons. I have made great efforts to get weapons for them but until now unsuccessfully.[13]

It is not clear what Kanj's position really was or whether he was genuinely representing the views of Sultan al-Atrash. In fact, the article may not contradict Shai evidence that he was on a mission from Sultan al-Atrash but rather confirm it. It may have been an attempt to cover up or counteract rumours of Druze neutrality. Notwithstanding sporadic reports of recruitment attempts there is little evidence of any Druze involvement in hostilities, and it appears that a policy of neutrality was indeed observed by the majority of Palestinian Druze. It is difficult to say whether or not this directly resulted from Sultan al-Atrash's alleged position or simply expressed the quite understandable desire of non-political Druze to keep their heads down, an attitude most Muslim Palestinians were also adopting. The only major difference between the two communities lay in the declared position of their leaders. Hagana reports reflect the relief felt by the Jews at this apparent neutrality: 'Until today' said a report dated 16 January, 'the residents of the Druze villages have not participated in any operation or given aid. The Druze are acting in complete neutrality'.[14]

Some Druze were more co-operative than neutral. Several Druze individuals approached the Jews asking for help and proclaiming solidarity with them. On 18 January 1948 a Druze policeman in 'Isfiya met with Jewish 'friends'. He told them that the Arab gangs were demanding men and money from the Druze villages and that

the Druze had fended them off by saying that they had yet to receive instructions from Jabal Druze. He points out that 'next in line after the Jews are the Druze and therefore they have a common cause'. He also asks for ten rifles in case they should be needed. The report goes on to state that another meeting with him and a man from Shafa'amr was planned.[15] This further meeting took place on 23 January. The second man involved was Shaykh Salih Khanayfis from Shafa'amr.[16] During the meeting Khanayfis made clear how he saw the Druze position:

> Although the situation is difficult, the extremists amongst the Arabs have gained the upper hand and gangs of volunteers have begun arriving from Syria. Despite this the Druze still remain friendly towards the Jews. This is for two reasons: the Druze as a minority believe that the strengthening of the Jews will benefit them, and the Druze as men of labour and peace have much sympathy for this [Jewish] struggle; indeed all the Druze take a neutral position, both those in the country and those from the Druze mountain [Jabal Druze].

He goes on to propose an agreement between the Druze of Shafa'amr and the Jews based on the following points:

1) The Druze shall not participate in or initiate attacks on the Jews.
2) The Druze shall not attack the Jews. Of course it is possible that amongst the Druze there will be renegades who will be tempted by bribery but there is no doubt that their number will be so small that it should not be taken into account.
3) The Druze are interested in helping the Jews by keeping the peace in their region. For this they require financial assistance and other requirements in order to purchase ammunition which is lacking. They have 92 rifles which should be sufficient. The first two items the Druze in Shafa'amr commit themselves to keep whether or not they receive financial assistance from the Jews.

Khanayfis then specifies exactly what he means by 'financial assistance'. He wants 50 to 100 lira per month per Shaykh, 'so that

the Shaykhs will be free to oversee public relations and other light assistance', and he wants a one-time payment of 500 to 1000 lira for the purchase of ammunition, submachine guns, and bombs. If these requirements are met then 'the Druze in Shafa'amr will take a clear-cut position which can be described as neutral in favour of the Jews'.[17] He concludes the agreement by speaking of the possibility that the Jews could make a similar agreement with Shaykh Asad al-Kanj of Majd al-Shams (Kamal al-Kanj's father) in spite of the 'tremendous pressure being put on him to join the Arabs'. He points out the influence that Asad al-Kanj had on the Druze community both in Palestine and Syria and claims that 'he is ready to come to an agreement with us to help and be helped by the Jews according to the principles of the Shafa'amr proposal but on a larger scale'.[18]

There is no evidence in the documentary material of any official Jewish reaction to this proposal. However, Khanayfis did operate throughout the war as a Druze informer, as we shall see later, implying that some kind of agreement involving financial assistance was at least reached with him personally.

Pro-Jewish approaches from a few individual Syrian Druze also occurred during this period. On 9 February 1948, a young man got out of a taxi in the Jewish settlement of Shavei Tzion and handed a note to one of the young Jewish boys standing on the side of the road. It read:

> To the Supreme Jewish Revolutionary Committee: I bring you my warmest regards. I have come from Syria from Jabal Druze and I wish to be in your army fighting in your defence – Anis Hatum, Suwayda, Jabal Druze.

After being questioned it emerged that he had travelled from Syria as an envoy of the 'Youth Federation' [*Jam'iyya ittihad al-shabab*], a group of young men in Jabal Druze whose president was Muhammad al-Atrash, Sultan al-Atrash's nephew. He carried with him a letter from the group stating that it conferred upon him 'authority and freedom of action in all negotiations concerning the crisis, and the authority to negotiate with whomever it is necessary to negotiate with from amongst the Israeli organizations'. The purpose of the mission was to volunteer young Syrian Druze for the Hagana. He said that Druze in the villages in Syria were being forced to join the Arab

side despite the fact that most wanted to fight alongside the Jewish forces. He added that the Druze had no intention of gaining financially from their actions but rather were making these proposals on the basis of 'feelings' (*hargashot*). He went on to say that 100 men from Syria were ready at that moment to join the Hagana.[19]

Again, there is no evidence of an official Jewish response to this proposal. During his visit to Palestine Anis Hatum also made contact with his Druze relatives living in Daliyat al-Karmal, Sulayman Hatum and his son Muhammad. One can only assume that these men had been aware of his intention of visiting Palestine and facilitated his journey, which he apparently made without any official papers.[20] There is no evidence that Shai gave any serious consideration to Hatum's claims but they did keep in touch with him. Later in the war he was to play a role in a plan designed to use the Syrian Druze to destabilize the Syrian war effort.[21]

The attitude of the Druze did not go unnoticed by local nationalist leaders. As early as mid-January a dispute broke out between the Shaykhs of the village of 'Isfiya and Shaykh Nimr al-Khatib, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine and a prominent member of the Haifa Arab National Committee. The dispute concerned the killing of a Druze dock worker in Haifa by a Muslim fellow worker. The Shaykhs of 'Isfiya met with Shaykh Nimr to complain about the murder. In the discussions that followed Shaykh Nimr attacked the Druze for not being 'nationalists' and for not taking any 'hostile actions' against the Jews. The Druze defended themselves as they had to the Arab gangs in January: they could not enter any conflict until it was so decided on Jabal Druze, and they sent an official letter of complaint to Sultan al-Atrash about the aggressive attitude of the Muslims in Palestine towards the Druze.[22] During the same period, hand-written pamphlets were put up in Hawassa, a Muslim village near Haifa, proclaiming that the Druze Shaykh Labib Abu Rukn of 'Isfiya had gone to Jabal Druze on a mission from the Jewish Agency in order to persuade the Druze leaders not to come to the aid of the Palestinian Arabs. There is no documentary evidence of this visit and it may just have been a rumour generated by the widespread hostility in the Muslim community towards the Druze.[23]

As the civil war progressed Druze informers became more active in helping Hagana operations. Both Salih Khanayfis and his friend Jabr Mu'addi of Yarka were in constant contact with the Shai field agent

Mordecai Shakhevitch, then reporting to Geura Zayd. Shakhevitch, a sabra, had worked before the war for a variety of chemical companies selling fertilizers to the Arabs living in the area around Gadera. Through his work he made extensive contacts with the Palestinian community as a whole and with the Druze in particular. Towards the middle of the 1940s he had also started working for Shai, using his contacts to gather intelligence.[24]

In March 1948 Shakhevitch asked Khanayfis to spend a few days in Acre to report on the morale of its citizens. Khanayfis apparently returned to Shakhevitch a few days later and told him that it would not be difficult to take Acre. A few days later an unnamed Druze informed Shakhevitch that a large convoy of enemy weapons was to be taken from Beirut to Haifa on 17 March. The Hagana prepared an ambush and the convoy was attacked and destroyed.[25]

There is some evidence that during February and March 1948, as hostilities increased and as pressure intensified on the Arab community as a whole to participate in the fighting, a limited amount of pro-Arab Druze activity occurred. Hagana reports state that a ‘Druze gang numbering approximately 60 men’ attacked a Jewish convoy travelling between Khaltsa and Buzia on 7 February, resulting in the deaths of several Jews. In March, Tawfiq Bey Abu Hamdan, a Druze living in Haifa, was nominated by the Arab National Committee there to lead a small Druze force on Mount Carmel.[26] No more information is given about either of these events, but they do reveal that some Druze were fighting on the Arab side.

Shakib Wahab and the Druze battalion

On Jabal Druze, meanwhile, Qawuqji had finally found a Druze willing to organize a battalion of Druze mercenaries which would then form part of the Arab Liberation Army. Shakib Wahab had fought in the Druze revolt against the French in 1925 and had served as a captain in the Druze Brigade of the British Army during the Second World War. According to a long, top-secret report drafted for Israeli military intelligence later in the war, Sultan al-Atrash opposed the idea that the new Druze battalion of the ALA should operate in any official Druze capacity. Sultan evidently agreed to give his tacit approval to the battalion’s formation on the condition that it was not called ‘The Battalion of Jabal Druze’ but rather ‘The Battalion of

Jabal "Arab"'.[27] Shakib managed to recruit approximately 500 fighters at a wage of 60 lira per month with weapon, and 35 lira without. Among his officers was his own son, Captain Kamal Wahab. It was decided that the base for the Druze battalion in Palestine would be in Shafa'amr, a mixed town of Druze, Christians and Muslims. Situated on the main road between the bloc of Druze villages in western Galilee and the Druze villages on the Carmel, Shafa'amr was an ideal location – both politically and geographically – for the Druze battalion's headquarters.

On 11 March Syrian Druze visited the Druze quarter of Shafa'amr and demanded the evacuation of the forward houses at the foot of the hill and on the ascent to the town. The Palestinian Druze living in these houses apparently did not want to vacate them but, unable to resist the pressure, left to stay in Haifa.[28] There is some evidence that the Druze in Shafa'amr were not overjoyed at having the Druze battalion billeted in their town. On 23 March Druze from the battalion made more reconnaissance visits, and a Hagana intelligence report states that: 'The Druze who earlier agreed to allow their entry into the village are now unifying themselves with the Christians against them. In a meeting with the Christians they decided to resist them with all their force.'[29] A later Hagana report describes the disputes that occurred in Shafa'amr between the Muslims on the local Arab National Committee and the Druze of Shafa'amr and the surrounding villages, over whether or not to allow the entry of 'gangs' into the town. The Druze argued that the crops had been good that year and that if military action commenced in the area then the Jews would not allow them access to their fields and the harvest would be ruined. The report states that the Muslims, whose lands were situated on the roads to the kibbutzim in the area, did not express these anxieties.[30]

Shakib Wahab and his men arrived in Shafa'amr on 30 March 1948.[31] According to IDF sources the Druze of Shafa'amr put on a good show of welcoming him, but certain prominent Druze tried to dissuade him from attacking the Jews.[32] In a meeting with the Jews at the beginning of April the Druze of 'Isfiya reassured the Jews that they would not willingly let any gang members into their town. They expressed fear, however, about their ability to refuse entry to fellow Druze: 'If Druze come how can we fight them rather than receive them.' They were also opposed to 'suggestions' from the Jewish

side that Shakib Wahab be bribed so that he would leave his command: 'our men did not accept this suggestion'.[33]

Those Druze who had actively helped the Jewish war effort were clearly unnerved by the arrival of fellow Druze from the Jabal fighting on the Arab side. One anonymous Druze informer even told Hagana contacts that the Druze battalion had not come to Shafa'amr to fight the Jews, but rather to protect the Druze from Muslim attack.[34] There is no evidence of any truth to this report, but it does reflect the fear felt in the Druze community concerning Muslim reprisal attacks like those that occurred in 1936–39. On 7 April Druze sources in Daliyat al-Karmal reported to Hagana intelligence of the arrival of the 'men of the Druze company' in 'Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal. Other reports confirm that Shakib Wahab himself visited the two villages, but contain no information about what occurred during the visit.[35] Another report made the same day, however, speaks of the existence of a pro-Arab Druze group in 'Isfiya. The report lists the names of the group's members and claims that it is 'their intention to attack Jewish traffic'.[36] It is perhaps not so remarkable that the sudden upsurge in nationalist activity in 'Isfiya happened to coincide with Shakib's visit there.

Three days after his arrival in Shafa'amr Shakib conducted a patrol of the surrounding area to check the 'condition of the population'. He states in a report which he later sent back to command headquarters in Damascus that he found the population to be 'fearful'. He established small armed groups within each village and put a villager in charge of each, stating that 'this person shall also see to the men's training and will respond when we demand action from him'. He notes that as a consequence of his organizational measures there was 'growing enthusiasm' among the villagers for participating in military action, but he also complains of a lack of ammunition. As a result of his observation that the 'enemy is well equipped with heavy and modern weapons', Shakib issued a request for six field guns, two anti-tank guns, six trucks, a doctor and a first-aid car. He goes on to ask if the Acre region can be put under his authority in accordance with the request of both the Arab National Committee in the town and representatives of the surrounding villages. This request was denied on the basis of the fact that Adib Shishakli, the Syrian commander of the Yarmuk II Battalion of the ALA, already had command over that area.[37]

Shakib Wahab emerges from the documents as a competent and professional army officer and as a stickler for discipline. About a week after he arrived in Shafa'amr he heard that a soldier of his named 'Abdallah al-Fajri had been brought before the deputy commander of the battalion for disobeying the orders of his platoon commander 'without reason and against regulations'. He discharged the soldier immediately and made the following speech to his battalion:

> It is known to all that we have no Druze aims [in this war] but that we are merely professionals who receive salaries and who must fulfil any obligation bestowed upon them . . . there are those who say we are gang members and under no authority. This is false. We are a regular army . . . and anyone who receives a salary, wears a uniform and receives food, must know that he is under authority and that this authority covers him.[38]

Why did Wahab maintain that 'we have no Druze aims in this war'? It could be because of Sultan al-Atrash's purported insistence that the battalion not have any specifically *Druze* objectives against the Jews, or it could indicate fears on Wahab's part that his soldiers were being too easily influenced by pro-Jewish Palestinian Druze in Shafa'amr. Both interpretations would bolster the claim that Syrian Druze unity with the Arab cause was shaky even in these early days of the war. But perhaps this is to approach the question with too much hindsight. Taking Wahab's concerns at face value is probably the best way to picture the atmosphere of his command and his battalion at the end of March 1948. Wahab comes across as a man with clear Arab nationalist objectives. He was part of an Arab army fighting an Arab war against a common enemy and this was his motivation for playing down the Druze character of the battalion to his troops.

The battle of Ramat Yohanan

On 4 April Qawuqji attacked the isolated Jewish settlement of Mishmar Ha'emek. By 6 April he was in trouble and being pushed back by Jewish forces. Seeing the need to stop an ensuing Jewish advance on Jenin, Qawuqji sent a telegram to Shakib Wahab in Shafa'amr asking for help: 'To the Bani Ma'ruf [the Druze]. I hereby address you. I am besieged; if you will not come to my aid my complaint is to God.'[39]

Shakib responded by moving into Husha and Kasayr, two Palestinian villages lying near the Jewish settlement of Ramat Yohanan. His intention was to launch an attack on Ramat Yohanan from these villages and, by splitting the Jewish forces between Mishmar Ha'emek and Ramat Yohanan, take some of the pressure off Qawuqji.[40] On the morning of 12 April, soldiers of the Druze battalion opened fire on Jewish workers who were constructing a reservoir to the east of Ramat Yohanan. This was the first hostile action taken by Shakib Wahab against the Jewish forces since his arrival in Shafa'amr two weeks previously. Tzadok Eshel, a member of the Carmeli Brigade, the Hagana brigade that was ordered to defend Ramat Yohanan, states in his memoir that:

> The Druze battalion under the command of Shakib Wahab had refrained until now from clashing with our forces and attacking our settlements mostly thanks to the efforts of our people in the Shai who had befriended the local Druze notables.[41]

The battle that followed Shakib's initial attack lasted five days, and was very fierce. The Jewish forces were surprised by the tenacity and discipline with which the Druze fought. On 14 April, the two sides met in hand-to-hand combat after a unit of company size (formed from Battalion 21 of the Carmeli Brigade) attempted to attack Druze positions north of Ramat Yohanan. The Jewish forces were pushed back and 12 Jewish soldiers were killed, most of them platoon commanders. Moshe Carmel, the commander of the Carmeli Brigade wrote:

> I saw retreating units returning one after the other without their commanders . . . the brigade for the first time had hit upon an enemy whose ability was much superior to the Arab fighter and which had inflicted defeat upon it. The spirits of the brigade were down and its faith in its own ability had been undermined.[42]

In a report to command headquarters in Damascus Shakib spoke of his success in repelling the Jewish counterattack:

> The battles continued the whole day. We have defeated them resoundingly and pushed them back to the village of Kafr Ata. The

> losses of the Jews are at least 200 killed and injured. Much booty was taken by us. Four of our men were killed and ten wounded.[43]

A strange incident occurred in the aftermath of this battle. Due to the urgency of their retreat the Jewish forces had been unable to take with them six of their battle dead. The bodies were apparently found the next morning by Druze soldiers naked and mutilated. Shakib was enraged by this abuse and ordered an investigation into the affair.[44]

After the defeat of the Jewish forces on 14 April, the decision was made in the headquarters of the Carmeli Brigade to try to occupy the villages of Husha and Kasayr, from which the Druze forces were launching their attacks on the Ramat Yohanan bloc. Two units of the Carmeli Brigade entered the villages at dawn on 16 April and met little resistance. According to Moshe Carmel this was due to the fact that Shakib had been unable to billet his men in the villages overnight and instead allowed them to return to Shafa'amr, leaving behind only a relatively small night guard. The Jewish forces were lucky in that their attack on the villages was mounted only half an hour before the return of most of the soldiers of the Druze battalion from Shafa'amr to their daytime occupation of the villages.[45]

Isma'il Qabalan, deputy commander of B Company in the Druze battalion, contradicts this; he claims that the battalion had packed up and moved out of the villages the previous day because information had reached Shakib that the Jews had won a decisive victory over Qawuqji at Mishmar Ha'emek. According to Qabalan, Shakib was afraid of a combined Jewish attack following the arrival of reinforcements from Mishmar Ha'emek and withdrew from the villages to Shafa'amr in order to concentrate his own forces.[46]

The Palestinian historian 'Arif al-'Arif, in his famous history of the war, *al-Nakba* (*The Catastrophe*) also mentions the lack of any Druze defences in Shafa'amr at the time of the Hagana assault: 'No one knows why the Druze had withdrawn . . . they [the Jews] saw, and their joy was great, that the Druze had withdrawn from their positions leaving only a small squad in Husha and Kasayr.' It is difficult to believe that this withdrawal of troops was anything other than a tactical mistake on Shakib Wahab's part. The intensity of the Druze counterattack, and of the battle that followed (which the Druze came very close to winning) puts paid to any suspicions that this temporary withdrawal from Shafa'amr was part of a prearranged deal

between Shakib Wahab and the Hagana, as ʻArif al-ʻArif seems to be hinting.[47]

Whatever the reason for the absence of serious Druze resistance, the Jewish forces were in full control of the villages by six o'clock that morning. The Druze counterattacked and charged the villages several times. At one point the battle in Husha was reduced to hand-to-hand combat, and two Druze soldiers managed to penetrate the village only to be killed inside.[48] According to Jewish accounts the 'Druze charged ferociously with large knives – glistening in the sunlight – held between their teeth.'[49]

At the same time the Jewish forces were running low on ammunition and attempts to bring in reinforcements had failed. The company commander continued to send urgent requests for more ammunition back to Ramat Yohanan, until finally, in the middle of the afternoon, he asked to be allowed to give up the fight: 'Every man has four bullets. There is no more ammunition for the machine guns. Request permission to retreat.' But the reply from command headquarters in Ramat Yohanan insisted: 'You must hold on even if the bullets run out. If you retreat you will all be wiped out. Fight with knives and anything that is at hand.'[50] At 16:30, however, an armoured car arrived carrying ammunition and a machine gun. The Druze were pushed back and retreated to Shafaʻamr. The Jews held both villages, Husha and Kasayr, and the battle for Ramat Yohanan was effectively over.[51]

On 17 April, in the aftermath of the battle, Shakib sent a report describing the fighting of the previous day to ALA headquarters. In this report we see evidence of the degree of local Druze participation in the fighting. According to Shakib Wahab, ten villagers from Shafaʻamr were killed and ten wounded during the Druze counterattacks, and 'some' (Shakib does not specify the number) residents from the nearby Druze village of Yarka were killed, after they arrived as part of the reinforcements that came to Shafaʻamr in the early afternoon.[52] Certainly there is not much evidence of a large contingent of support from the local Druze inhabitants.[53] In his report Shakib describes the Druze position in Shafaʻamr as 'very serious' and requests reinforcements both in men and matériel. He says that the battalion can do nothing but guard Shafaʻamr with the small amount of ammunition remaining and that the morale of both soldiers and local residents is very low. He ends the report by attacking the Arab leadership in general, laying the blame for his defeat at their door:

> If the distinguished Arab League and headquarters of the Arab Liberation Army are indeed interested in liberating the country and destroying the Zionist nests – as is the wish of all the Arab capitals – then there is need for more equipment and preparation. By God! By God! By God!. The fighting with the enemy from 12 April until today is no less important than the heavy Syrian fighting with the brave French. Why do you not appreciate the technical talent and deadly weapons of the enemy? The Zionists prepared for over two years for this uprising and here are the examples: Mishmar Ha'emek, Kastel, Dayr Yassin. In these battles men, women, and children were killed and this killing indicates the enemy's preparation arising from his wish to remain master of the country. It must be remembered that our fight with the enemy is not merely a test to familiarize ourselves with his strength. We must liberate a people from its cruel enemy and if – God forbid – the enemy succeeds there will be no Arabs remaining anywhere.[54]

After Ramat Yohanan

Although the Hagana had won the battle of Ramat Yohanan, it had been a fierce struggle and the Druze battalion had proved to be a formidable enemy. Those who before the battle had established links between the Hagana and the Druze community recognized the need to rebuild bridges broken down by the events at Ramat Yohanan. The possibility of a meeting between Geura Zayd and a group of officers from the defeated Druze battalion was first suggested by Labib Abu Rukn. The meeting was set up by Khalil Bashir Quntar, a Druze from Jabal Druze who had settled on Mount Carmel. Geura Zayd informed Moshe Dayan (then a Lieutenant Colonel) of the proposed meeting and Moshe Dayan gave it his full blessing and said he would attend. The meeting took place on 20 April.[55] Geura Zayd first met the Druze officers, led by Isma'il Qabalan, the deputy commander of 'B' Company in the Druze battalion, under a tree outside the abandoned village of Husha. The Druze officers had also brought with them hoes and picks in order to bury their dead comrades lying in the field. Led to Geura Zayd by Khalil Bashir Quntar, they exchanged greetings and 'embraced and kissed in the eastern tradition'.[56] From there they travelled with Geura Zayd to Kiryat Amal, a nearby Jewish town; in a small restaurant they met Moshe Dayan and Labib Abu Rukn.

The presence of Moshe Dayan apparently worried the Druze. Dayan's brother had been killed in the battle of Ramat Yohanan and, according to Dayan, 'they suspected a trap, [namely] that the meeting had been a stratagem to avenge the blood of Zorik'. But he was able to assuage their fears and the 'Druze officers were reassured', wrote Dayan in his memoirs:

> They were Arab and the blood feud was part of their custom and tradition. They assumed it was part of mine too. But I was a Jew and followed Jewish custom and tradition, in which the blood feud has no place. Moreover, Zorik's death was my private grief, and I kept it strictly apart from the purpose in which I was engaged. I had come on a political and military mission, to turn an enemy into a neutral or a friend.[57]

The meeting was friendly and a deal was struck. It was agreed that the Druze would not engage in hostile actions against the Jewish forces. The Druze then suggested that the Druze battalion be absorbed into the Carmeli Brigade. Moshe Dayan told the Druze that he was not authorized to give his approval to this idea without first consulting Yigal Yadin, then Hagana Chief of Operations, and that he would inform them of Yadin's decision. Before leaving Kiryat Amal to return to their battalion in Shafa'amr, the Druze apparently asked for some packets of chocolate with Hebrew handwriting on them, to prove to their friends in the unit that they had actually met with the Jews. Someone on the Jewish side suggested giving them money, but Moshe Dayan rejected this idea. 'We have made a pact with you', he said, 'and this is worth much more than money.'[58]

At a second meeting a few days later,[59] Moshe Dayan told the Druze that Yigal Yadin had suggested that the idea of merging the battalion with the brigade be put on hold, but that a policy of cooperation should be pursued.[60] They agreed that the Druze should engage in a series of sabotage actions between the Druze villages of al-Rama and Buqay'a in the upper Galilee, and that the officers should encourage a movement of desertion inside the ranks of the battalion.[61]

In the first week of May, Shakib sent two reports back to ALA headquarters which reflected his mood of desperation. He was almost certainly hearing rumours of what was going on between his officers

and the Jews, but he had not at this point been informed of the negotiations or directly involved in them. There already were desertions from the battalion, and the mood of the local population was becoming more and more hostile to his continuing presence there.[62] On 2 May and again on 7 May he wrote to command headquarters detailing these concerns. The letters reveal a man on the brink of despair, and explain the actions that he was to take a few days after they were sent. On 2 May he wrote:

> Morale has declined drastically after the events in Haifa, especially the morale of the people of Shafa'amr.[63] They are lax about fulfilling their duties such as guarding the base. During the harvest days they are co-operating with the Jews in the fields. They want good relations with the Jews, something that is in opposition to our cause. Due to the small number of our men and the lack of co-operation of the residents we cannot possibly maintain this situation unless you send reinforcements.

Receiving no response to his letter, Shakib wrote again on 7 May:

> I was very surprised that you did not give your attention to my letter and did not respond to the important points that I made. I am inclined to think that the lack of response on your part indicates a lack of interest which is intentional. This is very strange. You are ignoring the fact that the situation here is serious and we need help. The fate of the nation depends on you. Why do you not assist us with the benefit of your wise advice, O honourable headquarters? It is true that I am sending impolite letters to you but headquarters will forgive me for this because there are reasons which are forcing me to act in this way [including]:
>
> 1) the dispersal of our forces and the weakening of the soldiers' morale;
> 2) the crowdedness of the region due to the large number of refugees from Haifa and its environs;
> 3) lack of co-operation from the local population;
> 4) lack of ammunition and heavy guns;
> 5) our requests that are not fulfilled. All these things are giving me doubts. I am awake day and night under pressure to establish telephone contact with headquarters. To this must be

> added the pressure of the officers and the soldiers which is a result of the propaganda and rumours prevalent in the area.[64] This pressure is driving me mad . . . We are desperate: what shall we do? It is impossible to continue in this fashion.

Shakib goes on in his letter of 7 May to defend himself in the face of his defeat at Ramat Yohanan:

> It must be remembered that on the eve of the end of the British Mandate, there are Arabs in difficulties in all parts of the country. The Arab Liberation Army has been defeated in Mishmar Ha'emek and 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni has been killed at Kastel and his forces have been dispersed . . . The fact that Shakib Wahab is holding out in his region adds to his honour even though there are those who have been whispering that he is a mercenary of the Jews.[65]

Two days later, on 9 May, a meeting took place between Shakib Wahab and Josh Palmon, a senior member of Shai.[66] The Hagana's need to make contact with Shakib Wahab had been agreed upon at a meeting which had occurred a couple of days earlier between Josh Palmon, Geura Zayd and Mordecai Shakhevitch on the Jewish side, and Labib Abu Rukn and Salih Khanayfis on the Druze side. Shakib was first approached by his son and deputy commander, Kamal Wahab. Kamal was a close personal friend of Isma'il Qabalan, and was privy to the events of the preceding couple of weeks. The meeting was held in the house of Salih Khanayfis in Shafa'amr. Shakib arrived by himself without an escort and seemed willing to make an agreement. In a later interview Josh Palmon stated that 'our resistance in the face of his troops at Ramat Yohanan had influenced him. We persuaded him that it was possible to trust us.'[67] Shakib agreed to co-operate with the Jews on condition that his name would not be tarnished.[68] According to Palmon, he even asked the Hagana to 'give' him the Jewish settlement of Yekhi'am: 'When I return to Syria I have to have some achievement to show them. Give Yekhi'am to me. I promise that not a hair shall fall from the head of a child there.' Palmon refused.[69]

It was agreed that each side would not attack the other and that Shakib would try to place the Acre region under his control.[70] This

never happened because the Hagana pre-empted him, launching an attack on Acre on 14 May, the day the British withdrew from Palestine. The people of Acre apparently asked for the assistance of Shakib and his battalion. He responded – 'under the advice of the Jews'[71] – that he did not have adequate weapons and equipment to face the Jewish attack. Acre fell to the Hagana in three days. On 15 May, the Arab armies invaded Palestine. Shakib sat tight in Shafa'amr and did not engage in any attack on the Jewish forces.

Where did the Druze–Jewish relationship stand at the end of the civil war? The allegiance of individual Druze to the Jewish cause had been proven in time of war; men such as Salih Khanayfis and Labib Abu Rukn had maintained their pro-Zionist position in spite of considerable pressure to do otherwise. This had further strengthened their position in the eyes of their Jewish contacts. The Druze community had, on the whole (there were exceptions), remained neutral during the fighting, and the resulting tension between the Druze and the leaders of the Arab nationalist movement (particularly the influential Nimr al-Khatib) echoed the tension of the 1936–39 Revolt.

The defeat of the Druze battalion at Ramat Yohanan had a significant effect on both the Druze and the Jews and on their attitude towards each other. For those Druze who had supported the aims of the battalion it was a crushing military defeat which underscored the fighting potential of the Jewish forces. Put in the context of other Arab defeats of the period – at Kastel (10 April), Mishmar Ha'emek (12 April), Tiberias (18 April) and Haifa (22 April) – Ramat Yohanan was a pointer to a general Jewish victory. The Druze cannot also have been immune to the psychological effects of the massacre by the Irgun of over 250 civilians in the village of Dayr Yassin (9 April). In short, it seemed as if the Jews were winning and those Druze who had believed in the inevitability of an Arab victory were having to reassess their position. For those Druze who had supported the Jews from the beginning, the defeat at Ramat Yohanan must have been a relief and a vindication of their position.

From the Jewish perspective, although they had won at Ramat Yohanan, the battle had been fierce, indeed one of the fiercest of the period, and for those involved in Druze–Jewish relations the military importance of Druze neutrality, particularly on Jabal Druze, was reinforced. The subsequent overtures of friendship from the officers of

the battalion and from Shakib Wahab himself were encouraging signs for a future alliance and also served as confirmation of the potential particularistic tendencies of the Druze.

3
A Strengthening of Ties, May–September 1948

At midnight on 14 May 1948, the British Mandate over Palestine expired and the State of Israel was declared. The next morning the Arab armies invaded, marking the end of the civil war and the beginning of the inter-state Arab–Israeli war. The Israeli military position was not as perilous as traditional Israeli historiography would have it. Qawuqji's Arab Liberation Army had been all but routed from the north, having suffered a series of humiliating defeats, and Jewish forces had captured key Arab centres of population there, including Haifa, Acre, Tiberias and Safad. In the two days before the termination of the Mandate, they had also taken the coastal strip in the western Galilee right up to the Lebanese border, causing the exodus of most of the civilian population from that area. The Lebanese and the Syrians were the two Arab armies that the Israelis faced in the north. To the south, on the central front, they faced the Iraqi army; in Jerusalem and the surrounding area they faced the Jordanian Arab Legion, the most formidable of the Arab armies and the one that was to inflict the heaviest losses on the Israeli forces. In the far south they faced the Egyptians.

On the northern front, the area with which this book is concerned, the Syrian and Lebanese armies, in spite of some initial success, were quickly put on the defensive by the Israeli forces. It became clear that these two Arab armies were not going to achieve their military objectives, namely, recapturing the major towns already taken by the pre-state Jewish forces. The mood of the civilian Arab population in the north, having been stirred up by the promises of the Arab governments to 'push the Jews into the sea', became increasingly

despondent. The refugee situation was reaching a critical level, spurred on by the IDF 'whispering' campaigns designed to frighten the civilian population into leaving.

During this period the links between Israel and the Druze became firmer. In the months ahead the Druze proved their usefulness, both politically and militarily, to the Israeli war effort and the question of the Druze and the growing co-operation with them became an important issue in the Israeli Foreign Office and a subject for political debate. This chapter traces those developments, looking at the final collapse of Shakib Wahab's battalion in Shafa'amr; the extraordinary circumstances of the ensuing Israeli conquest of that town; the spread of Druze–Israeli 'friendship' to the Druze villages in the western Galilee and Mount Hermon and the Israelis' continuing, tentative moves to establish, through their Druze friends, a working co-operation with Sultan al-Atrash on Jabal Druze.

The last days of the Druze battalion

The last part of the month of May witnessed the gradual disintegration of the Druze battalion in Shafa'amr. Over half of the soldiers of the battalion deserted because of the defeat at Ramat Yohanan and because of sporadic and insufficient salary payments. These soldiers sold their weapons and went back to Jabal Druze. The remaining men became increasingly unwelcome in Shafa'amr and one report relates that there were several instances of soldiers from the battalion raping women from the town.[1] As a result of deteriorating relations between the men of the battalion and the people living in Shafa'amr the battalion headquarters was moved to Bayt Istifan, on the outskirts of the town. There was a general atmosphere of collapse and some Druze soldiers were reported to be 'wandering aimlessly in the streets of Nazareth', at that time still under Arab control.[2] On 22 May Shakib Wahab and the few men remaining with him moved out of Shafa'amr, and retreated into Lebanese territory.

The defeat at Ramat Yohanan and the ensuing disintegration of the Druze battalion did much to heighten the tension between Druze and Muslims and push undecided Palestinian Druze towards the Israeli camp. Not only had the Druze been defeated but rumours of contacts between the officers of the Druze battalion and the Jews were rife amongst the Druze community and beyond. A Druze

informer for the Hagana reported that Shakib was ordered out of Shafa'amr on command from ALA headquarters in Damascus 'the reason being that the Druze are refusing to co-operate with the Arabs and did not go to the aid of Acre'.[3] Another Hagana report states that the soldiers of the Druze battalion stopped receiving salaries because their officers were suspected of 'being in line with the Jews'.[4] The local Muslim 'gang' leader Mahmud Safuri, who entered Shafa'amr with 150–300 men on 23 May to 'replace' Shakib Wahab,[5] conducted interrogations of many of the inhabitants of the village and a Hagana informer stated that he was 'especially heavy-handed with the Druze since [he] suspects them of having links with the Jews'.[6] These rumours exacerbated an already tense atmosphere in Shafa'amr and other villages where there were mixed Druze–Muslim populations. The Christians in Shafa'amr tended to side with the Druze, presumably out of a shared sense that both were religious minorities facing a much larger and potentially hostile Muslim majority. Mahmud Safuri had a reputation for thuggery from the days of the 1936–39 revolt, and was perceived as a common enemy by both Druze and Christians. It would not be accurate to say that the Druze and the Christians in Shafa'amr actively colluded with regard to Jews but the evidence seems to show that the Christians more often than not found themselves in line with Druze non-interventionism. A Hagana informer described the morale of the Druze and the Christians in Shafa'amr after the arrival of Safuri as depressed, stating that they were simply waiting for the Jews to take over the village 'in order to get rid of the outsiders'.[7] Shooting was heard from the Druze quarter of Shafa'amr for several nights after Safuri's arrival. According to a Hagana informer the shooting was not in salutation as was customary but rather a show of strength due to Druze memories of Safuri's attacks on them in the revolt of 1936–39. It seems just as likely, however, that the informer was eager to explain the shooting to his employers in such a way that their view of the Druze as anti-Muslim would not be undermined.[8]

The battle of Shafa'amr

Soon after the withdrawal of Shakib Wahab from Shafa'amr, the first truce of the war was enforced by the United Nations. It lasted for

about a month between 12 June and 8 July. What followed was a period of intense fighting that became known as the 'ten days' war'. This period of fighting marked the time between the ending of the first truce and the beginning of the second truce on 19 July 1948. During the 'ten days' war' the Israeli forces captured and occupied many important Palestinian towns, including Lydda, Ramle and Nazareth. The taking of Nazareth was the ultimate aim of Operation Dekel, whose objectives also included the conquest of several villages in the Galilee, including Shafa'amr.

On 14 July 1948, the IDF captured Shafa'amr. As far as the conflict between the Druze quarter and the Israeli forces was concerned the battle was fake and the Israelis were able to take the town in a few hours. The story of this landmark in Druze–Israeli relations is somewhat confused. The archival material concerning the battle is scanty, and Koren's account of the battle is anecdotal and episodic. Most of the information available comes from the memoirs of two men closely involved in the events surrounding the battle. The first memoir was written by Ben Dunkelman, the commander of the brigade which launched the attack on Shafa'amr. A Canadian Jew, Dunkelman was one of the 3000 or so volunteers from abroad (known by the Hebrew acronym *Mahal*) who came to fight on the Jewish side in the 1948 war. He was a committed Zionist and an experienced soldier, having served as an officer in the Canadian Army during the Second World War. As commander of the Seventh Brigade he played an important role in the Jewish victories in the Galilee during the war, not only in the period under discussion, but in October and November 1948 when the Israeli forces took the whole of the upper Galilee and swept into southern Lebanon up to the Litani river.

The second memoir is an autobiography recently published by Mordecai Shakhevitch.[9] Shakhevitch covers the events in more detail and was more deeply involved in the Jewish relationship with the Druze. He claims that while there are many different interpretations of the battle by different members of the political and military establishment in Israel, his version of events is definitive. Although assertions such as these are more likely to be motivated by self-promotion than by anything else, Shakhevitch was the individual most closely involved in every different aspect of the Israeli relationship with the Druze; he was 'the man on the ground', if anyone was. He states that

people 'have told lies in the past' but that those who were involved will know that he is telling the truth.[10]

At the beginning of July, while the first truce was still in force, the Seventh Brigade arrived in Nahariyya, Shakhevitch's stamping ground, with its recently appointed commander Ben Dunkelman. Haim Laskov, who had commanded the 79th Armoured Battalion of the Seventh Brigade before the truce, was appointed military governor of the western Galilee and was closely involved with the command of the brigade. Laskov was a *sabra* and there are indications in Dunkelman's memoir that relations between the two men were not easy.[11] There was a morale problem in the battalion due to its defeat in the battles for Latrun (between 25 and 31 May, 137 men of the Seventh Brigade were killed in the fighting there), and planning had begun for the implementation of Operation Dekel. The town of Shafa'amr was strategically important for the operation's success, since it lay near the Haifa–Nazareth road. The military rationale dictated that occupying Shafa'amr would facilitate taking the Muslim stronghold of Safuriyya which itself stood in a commanding position above Nazareth. Furthermore, the conquest of Shafa'amr would be crucial to raising the battalion's morale since it was the first phase of the operation. If the forthcoming battle for Shafa'amr were to go against the IDF the ultimate success of the operation would be put in jeopardy.

Shakhevitch had joined the brigade with what he describes as 'an undefined status'.[12] On hearing of the need to conquer Shafa'amr as part of the operation to take Nazareth, Shakhevitch saw an opportunity to make use of his already well-developed friendship with the Druze in Shafa'amr, particularly with Salih Khanayfis;

> I said to Laskov: 'As I understand it – from the situation and from my information and experience – we have to consider the major military force in Shafa'amr; this is the Druze. They are well organized as well as experienced in war. I am well connected with the central figures in their community. . . . I suggest that we should execute this battle with cunning and that the attack on the village should be a show of firepower which does not harm but whose sounds are clearly heard. This will give the needed impression on the neighbours of the Druze that Shafa'amr was conquered in blood and fire.[13]

Elements within the brigade opposed Shakhevitch's plan to make contact with the Druze before the battle. Chief among them was Haim Aurbah, the military intelligence officer attached to the brigade. Shakhevitch and Aurbah apparently hated each other and were in a constant state of conflict over the Druze question. Aurbah supported a cautious policy of friendship towards a few carefully selected Druze who were known to be friendly, but he regarded as reckless and possibly dangerous Shakhevitch's faith that the Druze community as a whole could be won over to support the Jewish side.

Ben Dunkelman describes the relationship between the two men:

> [There was] a deep personal animosity between Chaim and Mordechai. These two men had worked in close proximity for some time, and continued to do so within the brigade, but instead of this association bringing them closer to one another, they hated each other with an unbelievable intensity. Their personal feud was reflected and paralleled by a similar antipathy between the Druze friends and adherents of each one. Mordechai's Druze disliked Chaim's Druze, and vice versa.[14]

Due to Aurbah's opposition to the plan, Dunkelman was difficult to persuade. According to him Shai tended more towards Aurbah's attitude regarding the Druze than towards Shakhevitch's, and counselled caution when it came to meeting and negotiating with them. Shakhevitch put Dunkelman's reluctance down to the fact that he was a Canadian, and that 'in his Ashkenazi head – which was completely foreign to the East and its ways – there was no room for trickery in war'.[15]

Shakhevitch was at pains to point out that there was little risk in at least trying it his way. In spite of Dunkelman's initial doubts it was agreed that a meeting should be arranged with the Druze, mainly because Haim Laskov gave it his backing. In keeping with the rest of his analysis, Shakhevitch maintained that this was due to the fact that Laskov, a *sabra*, 'knew the ways of the enemy'. Interestingly, Shakhevitch also explains Laskov's enthusiasm for the plan as deriving from the fact that he had 'acquired his early experience of war and tactics from Orde Wingate in the Special Night Squads', which later developed into the Palmah.[16] Wingate was renowned in the military establishment as an excellent tactician, particularly when it came to carrying out actions that involved a degree of stealth.

A few days before the battle (the exact date is not documented) Dunkelman, Laskov, Aurbah and Shakhevitch had a secret meeting with representatives of the Druze community. Dunkelman describes this meeting vividly in his memoir but does not mention its location, although it probably took place in Shafa'amr. Aurbah seemed to be unhappy about attending a meeting that involved placing faith in Shakhevitch's Druze contacts, and according to Dunkelman he was 'hesitant about flouting the orders of his Shai superiors'.[17]

Dunkelman's assertion that Shai would have opposed the meeting is puzzling. After all, Palmon and Geura Zayd had approved of, and been involved in, the meetings between Shakib Wahab and Shai agents in equally (if not more) dangerous circumstances. It is unlikely that they were against the principle of conducting secret negotiations with the Druze. Either Dunkelman had misunderstood the Shai leadership's position on the matter (a possibility given the fact that Dunkelman was an outsider and a poor Hebrew speaker)[18] or Shai, influenced by Aurbah's hostility towards Shakhevitch, simply opposed any meeting arranged by him. But in spite of his reservations, Aurbah did attend the meeting, a meeting which was to have undeniably positive results for the Jewish forces.

The meeting took place in the middle of the night, after the four Jewish representatives crept across their lines into Arab-held territory. Ben Dunkelman's account conveys the atmosphere of tension and secrecy:

> We reached our destination in what seemed to be a fairly large village. Our escort led us in among the darkened houses, which were clustered closely together. On the way, we met no one; clearly, the Druze were just as interested as we were in keeping the meeting secret, and had taken precautions to maintain security. Our guides halted outside a large house, and ushered us in through a doorway. I was still apprehensive about the outcome of this perilous venture as I entered the impressive doorway, but by this time I was resigned to whatever was about to happen, and my curiosity had overcome my forebodings. Straightening up, I looked about me. The large room was lit by a single kerosene lamp which flickered uncertainly. By its feeble light, I could make out a number of shadowy figures: these would no doubt be various Druze notables from this and other villages.[19]

During the meeting the Druze made their support for the Jews clear. They asked Dunkelman directly if Jewish troops could occupy their villages. Dunkelman replied that such a move would be unwise 'since this would put [the Druze] people in the front line, placing their women and children in a precarious position'.[20] His response apparently reassured the Druze of the Jewish attitude towards them and the meeting was concluded with mutual promises of support, although Dunkelman does not mention any discussion of specific plans for the conquest of Shafa'amr. These were in fact finalized a few days later by Shakhevitch. But Dunkelman had been won over to the principle of negotiating with the Druze: 'That meeting had convinced me to put my trust in the Druze. Indeed from that night onwards, they proved to be loyal and valuable allies. Their aid was of immediate and decisive benefit in the conquest of Shafa'amr'.[21]

Shai was informed of the success of the meeting and the potential benefits that could be drawn from Druze co-operation for the successful outcome of Operation Dekel. At dusk on 13 July, a few hours before the battle, Shakhevitch, Geura Zayd and Amnon Yanai met with Salih Khanayfis and Husayn 'Alayan (also known as Abu Na'if), a prominent and influential Druze from Shafa'amr and a friend of Khanayfis. Shakhevitch's account of the meeting is as follows:

> We sat on the ground and unlike the usual customs of the East we had no time at all to start with greetings or to circle around each other with words. The danger and the tension were enormous. We were meeting representatives of the enemy a few hours before action and we had to guard ourselves not to let slip any secrets – not to expose our intentions and our plans. We had to say things without saying them openly. To hint and not to hint and with all that to make sure that we had been well understood. For this we required true resourcefulness and expertise. At the end of the meeting the hands of Shaykh Salih and Abu Na'if were held in my hands in a ceremonial and celebratory gesture which was proper at a moment in which you seal an agreement [*brit*], almost in the way our fathers had done in biblical times. 'Our artillery will be directed towards the heavens – I want you to leave with this clear knowledge. The time of the attack will be determined by the supreme commander; it might take place in a few days, a day, or an hour.' I squeezed their hands with my hands and Abu Na'if

> hugged and kissed me, his bushy moustache tickled my neck and he said 'We understand your words very clearly, *Inshallah* we will see each other soon.'[22]

The IDF attacked Shafa'amr that night at midnight, and by dawn they had occupied the village.
According to Dunkelman:

> Everything went according to plan. While the Moslem section was being shelled, the assault force – the 79th Armoured Battalion under Joe Weiner, with two companies from Arele Yariv's 21st Battalion – approached the walls. They and the Druze defenders fired harmlessly over each other's heads. The attackers quickly passed through the Druze lines, entering the village and taking the Moslems from the rear. Within a short time, the whole village was securely in our hands.[23]

Disaster had been near when someone in the battalion had told the artillery that in reality they *were* to fire on the Druze quarter. According to Shakhevitch he discovered the mistake just in time and reversed the order, and 'that terrible threat was cleared up'.

In spite of this confusion, the plan succeeded and Israeli troops suffered no casualties. Most of the Muslim inhabitants of Shafa'amr fled during the attack, as had the small group of Qawuqji's men who were stationed in the village. Among these were a few Druze left over from Shakib Wahab's battalion. The plan had worked and according to Shakhevitch his own prestige in the brigade was raised. Shakhevitch mentions Dunkelman's constant praise for him because of his actions, even in front of Yigal Yadin himself. Shakhevitch allowed the success of the Shafa'amr operation to direct his tactics for the rest of the war:

> The success of that trick, the saving of killed and wounded and the ensuing victory strengthened me in my faith that we can avoid losses and achieve good results if we use our heads, not our arms but our spirits, and therefore I committed my mind and energies to that only.[24]

The conquest of Shafa'amr marked a turning point in the history of Druze–Israeli co-operation during the war. From the Druze side, their

co-operation with the Hagana must be put in the context of the military successes that the Jewish forces had achieved on the central front up to this point in the war. In particular the fall of Lydda and Ramle two days before (10–12 July) and the exodus of nearly all the Palestinian population from these towns reinforced the increasing sense of the Jews' military supremacy.

From the Israeli perspective this was the first instance in which the military advantages of political manoeuvres with the Druze were starkly apparent. The IDF had been able to take a strategically essential town with no casualties at all to its own side. The fall of Shafa'amr, and the fleeing of its Muslim population, created panic in the surrounding Muslim villages, particularly Safuriyya. This made the task of capturing Safuriyya, and consequently Nazareth, much easier. Had the Druze in Shafa'amr opposed the Israelis and fought alongside the Muslims things might have turned out very differently. The success at Shafa'amr laid to rest any remaining doubts in the Israeli political establishment about the potential profit to be gained from spending time and money on the Druze, and those who had first espoused the advantages of such a relationship were vindicated. As Ya'cov Shim'oni reported to Reuven Shiloah in the Political Department of the Foreign Ministry in a later memo on the Druze:

> We had no military surprises in the Galilee thanks to a network of information-gathering and to the conquest of Shafa'amr which came as a result of good relations [with the Druze] and organization of the operation from within.[25]

Some concern was expressed about the government's singling out of the Druze for special treatment. In a letter he wrote to his old friend Ezra Danin at the end of July 1948, Yitzhak Avira, who had worked in Hagana Intelligence and who had been one of the few Israelis to protest against the destruction of Arab villages by the IDF, described the shock he felt after visiting Shafa'amr in the wake of its conquest by the IDF:

> I saw acts of purging Muslims and a looser attitude towards Christians and Druze. I made a brief visit to Shafa'amr. There I saw the faces of Druze who are not only walking freely in the town but also seem to rejoice in the Muslim calamity, Muslims who have

> been deported and whose property has been dispersed. Ezra, do not suspect that I am at all angry about our army's occupations and the way it is conducting its operations. I just see a danger in the assumption that a Druze or a Christian is 'kosher' and a Muslim is 'non-kosher'.

Danin's brusque reply is interesting:

> Concerning the attitude of the Druze and their treachery. They are not different from the Muslims and they are perhaps even worse. What determines their position is their choice or lack of it. The Muslims have backing whereas these Druze are weak; we can use their lack of choice while we are fighting alone in this war.[26]

Danin's reply reveals the suspicion which some members of the Israeli establishment still held towards the Druze. To Danin, who had been born in Jaffa and who had been inculcated since his boyhood with a highly developed sense of Zionism, with all the nationalistic fervour that that conveyed, the Druze were indeed engaging in a 'treachery' of their own national cause. If they could betray their Arab compatriots, could they not just as easily betray their newfound Israeli friends? But like so many of his colleagues, Danin put aside whatever worries he harboured about the morality of the Druze question in order to concentrate on the military aspects of the relationship, which the events at Shafa'amr had proven were invaluable. To Danin and men like him, Israel needed all the help it could get in a war which, although moving in Israel's favour, was far from won.

The Druze in the western Galilee

As was seen, by the beginning of the 'ten days' war' in early July, 1948, many leaders of the Druze communities of 'Isfiya, Daliyat al-Karmal and Shafa'amr expressed clear positions of non-intervention and even 'neutrality in favour of the Jews', to use the words of Khanayfis in the Shafa'amr agreement back in January.[27] But up to this point most of the contacts between the Druze and the Jews had been clustered in this particular region.[28] Not until late June, during the first truce, did the main centres of Druze population in the western

Galilee (Abu Snan, Yarka and Julis) join the Druze villages further south in a generally pro-Israel policy (Yanuh and Jath to the east were more reticent, probably because ALA soldiers were billeted there). These Druze villages of the western Galilee became the focus of attention for Israelis intent on co-opting Druze support. On 23 June 1948 a Hagana report states that a meeting took place in Abu Snan between Druze leaders from Abu Snan, Yarka and Julis, in which it was decided not to enter into any battles with the Jewish forces and to fight only to protect their villages. This decision was apparently forced by Qawuqji's attempts to recruit Druze villagers in the western Galilee into the Arab Liberation Army.[29]

After this agreement a series of meetings took place between the Druze in the western Galilee and Israelis. A report submitted in August 1948 by Benyamin Ben David, then commander of the Seventh Brigade, says that Haim Aurbah called a meeting with an unnamed Druze (the name is blanked out but other documentary evidence suggests it could have been Shaykh Marzuq Mu'addi from Yarka). In this meeting, held at the end of July, 'some of the problems of the Druze in Yarka, Julis, and Yanuh were discussed'.

A few days later, according to the report, another meeting was held with more unnamed Druze (again, probably including Shaykh Marzuq) in the house of Abba Hushi in Haifa. An agreement was reached in which the Israeli army promised to fortify the defences of Druze villages by giving them building material and a 'limited amount of weapons'. It was agreed that the army would send one of its own engineers to help build the fortifications, and that if the Arab Liberation Army attacked any Druze villages then the IDF would be obliged to come to its aid. In return for these guarantees the IDF was assured that, if the truce broke, the IDF would then be allowed to move into the previously unoccupied Druze villages after a staged battle.[30]

A separate intelligence report in the Hagana Archive confirms both meetings. It is possible that the report was written by Haim Aurbah himself although a name is not given. But whoever wrote the report was present at the meeting. The anonymous account of the meeting matches Ben David's account, and names the Druze present as Shaykh Marzuq, who was apparently accompanied by a Muslim called Shaykh Rabah. This source explains that the Druze's enthusiasm about coming to an agreement with the Israelis arose from the

growing tension between the Druze and the Muslims in the north over the rumours of Druze 'betrayal' of the Arab cause:

> At the meeting the guests informed us of the predicament in which the Druze found themselves. They are being accused of treachery and of being in collusion with the Jews. This week two Druze from Yarka were killed on their way from Yarka to Tarshiha [a Muslim town]; hence the Druze's interest in having a decisive agreement with us.

It was agreed after the second meeting in Abba Hushi's house that Shaykh Marzuq would draw up a written affirmation signed by representatives of all the Druze villages in the region and would then submit it to the Israelis for their signatures.[31]

This meeting between Aurbah and Shaykh Marzuq marked a breakdown of communications between the military and the Foreign Ministry over the question of the Druze. Although cousins and both from Yarka, Shaykh Marzuq Mu'addi and Jabr Dahish Mu'addi seem to have felt an intense rivalry. Jabr was one of Shakhevitch's contacts and served as the prime mover in Shakhevitch's parallel negotiations to bring the villages in the western Galilee into the fold. Jabr also had the support of Salih Khanayfis and of the Abu Rukn family. Aurbah's meeting with Jabr's purported enemy Marzuq caused a storm amongst the Shai agents – Geura Zayd, Shakhevitch, and their boss Palmon. It was seen as meddling which could possibly damage the delicate contacts with Khanayfis and Mu'addi and the Abu Rukns. Benyamin Ben David, in his report on the Aurbah–Marzuq meeting (which he attended), clearly anticipated these problems by expressing concern that Shakhevitch had not been consulted before the meeting occurred: 'In my opinion it was a mistake that a meeting was held with the Druze without hearing Shakhevitch's opinion.'[32] Shakhevitch himself later wrote a furious letter to Ben David objecting that the meeting should not have been held without first consulting him. He claimed that Marzuq was a disreputable character who did not represent 'even a small number of Yarka youth', and that Marzuq was motivated purely by his jealousy of his cousin Jabr's relationship with Shakhevitch. Most of all, Shakhevitch was upset that the Druze might think that the Israelis were deliberately exploiting Druze quarrels for their own political gain:

> Why should there be double dealing – shall we benefit by Druze quarrels and jealousy? This is what we have been trying to avoid and succeeded up until now; at least it should be avoided at this time.[33]

In the same letter Shakhevitch reveals that he is also upset that Abba Hushi attended the meeting:

> Heaven and earth know what I have done for the cause and many facts prove that Abba Hushi was always satisfied with my work; why is he complicating things with new factors?[34]

Abba Hushi himself had heard of the storm caused by the meeting and in a letter to Reuven Shiloah he distanced himself from it by stating that he had not initiated the meeting himself. But Hushi maintained that Shakhevitch was mistaken in his assessment that Marzuq was weaker than Jabr, and he endorsed Aurbah's support of Jabr. He was irritated at the notion that he needed to report to Shakhevitch on matters concerning the Druze:

> Until now I didn't know that if someone invites me to a meeting in general and with the Druze in particular I have to get someone's approval. Let me make an immodest note: all the relations with the Druze in the country and in the neighbouring country are a result of my diligent work for 15 years. Everyone who is involved in this issue knows that whenever someone talks to a Druze, they nearly always ask for a meeting with me.[35]

All this squabbling seems a clear case of too many cooks spoiling the broth. Each man clearly felt that his own clients in the Druze community were the most important and trustworthy, and that any doubt cast on this by political rivals threatened the position of the person or department in question. The mere fact that such bitter infighting arose itself clearly shows the growing importance to the Israeli political establishment of the relationship with the Druze.

Further doubt was cast on Shaykh Marzuq's reliability as a 'friend' by the fact that he met several times during this period with a Muslim nationalist from Acre, Rasul Khatib. After the occupation of Acre by the Hagana in May 1948 Khatib had slipped out of the city to join

Qawuqji's forces. He ended up in Tarshiha where he apparently served as political advisor to the ALA forces. A Hagana intelligence report in mid-August revealed that he stayed at one point in Shaykh Marzuq's house in Yarka, and that his purpose in going there was to 'deal with the situation personally because of the signs of friendship between the Druze and the Jews'. Khatib was attempting to confirm Druze allegiance to Qawuqji, an allegiance which until then had not been publicly rejected. He met with Shaykh Salman Tarif from Julis and Shaykh Salman Khayr from Abu Snan. Salman Tarif was the brother of Shaykh Amin Tarif, the influential religious leader of the Druze community in Palestine. Salman Khayr, who came from the most powerful Druze family in Abu Snan, was related to Labib Abu Rukn.

The meeting took place in Shaykh Marzuq's house. Rasul Khatib tried to persuade them to let Qawuqji's forces into their villages so that the ALA's military position in Tarshiha could be secured. He also wanted all Druze in the villages to give up their arms to the ALA forces. According to the informer, the Druze refused both requests without discussion and 'said that if Qawuqji attempted to enter the villages they would resist with all their force'.[36]

Although the Druze had apparently proved their adherence to the agreements they had made with the Israelis, their contacts with Khatib still made the Israelis uneasy. What followed is an example of the often Machiavellian tactics the Israelis employed in their increasingly important relationship with the Druze. Some of the Israelis involved did indeed express concern that Rasul Khatib might have some influence over the younger and potentially more nationalistic members of the Druze community, in spite of the reliable intelligence they had received about the Druze elders' categorical rejection of his demands. It was thus decided that Khatib's house in Acre should be destroyed as a warning to him to keep away from the Druze. At a more cynical level, blowing up his house was meant to send a clear signal to the Muslim nationalists that the Druze were indeed informing the Israelis of their activities:

> It should be hoped that Rasul Khatib will find out that his house was blown up and that he will find a connection between this and his activities among the Druze, given that he is staying in Yarka. It won't be difficult to conclude that his Druze friends informed us about his activities.

There is some evidence to indicate that this report was written by Aurbah and that he himself had taken the initiative to blow up the house. It would certainly fit in with the view of people like Shakhevitch that Aurbah had a tendency for double-dealing which could backfire dangerously.[37]

Upon hearing of Aurbah's meeting with Marzuq, Palmon wrote to Bechor Shitrit, the Minister for Minority Affairs, and threatened to resign if Aurbah was not told to stop involving himself in Druze affairs. Palmon described how he and Shakhevitch had made a series of 'mutual defence and guarding agreements' with the villages in the western Galilee with the help of Jabr, who was supported by Khanayfis and Labib Abu Rukn, and he stated that Aurbah's support of Marzuq would do nothing but harm:

> Since there is no point to nor possibility of working under these conditions I would ask you to give up my services to you or see to it that Haim Aurbah will not intervene in political issues which are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Minorities and the Middle East Department.

Ya'cov Shim'oni, by then Deputy Director of the Middle East Affairs Department of the Foreign Ministry, received a copy of the letter and scribbled a note on it to Sharett (Shim'oni actually calls him by his pre-Hebraicized name Shertok) which reveals that this misunderstanding was part of a pattern of communication and jurisdiction problems between the IDF and the Foreign Ministry:

> Another example of no co-ordination. It has nothing to do with policy-making or principle, [so] an internal settlement must be found. We think that only intervention by you and a request that the issues of the Druze and the like are not purely military but are part of the realm of responsibility of the Foreign Ministry, may fix things.[38]

The taking of Shafa'amr (which had facilitated the conquest of Nazareth) had brought home the potential military advantages of a friendly relationship with the Druze, and many of the Druze villages in the western Galilee lay in the neutral zone between Israeli and Arab lines. The Druze question assumed greater prominence in the

long letters that Shim'oni was sending at this time to his boss Elias Sasson, the Director of the Middle East Affairs Department of the Foreign Ministry.

At that time Sasson was in Paris attending the meetings of the United Nations General Assembly. The letters reported on the progress of the war in general. Shim'oni was a reflective and intellectual man who thought at length about the political consequences of particular policies and his analysis of the events of the war in general, and the Druze position in particular, make good reading. In a letter that Shim'oni sent to Sasson in the middle of August he tells him of the agreements being drawn up between the Druze and the Israelis concerning mutual defence and security issues. He makes sure to give credit to Palmon and Shakhevitch and Amnon Yanai:

> When I say 'our efforts' with the Druze I mean first and foremost Josh [Palmon] who takes care of this issue daily with the support of Mordecai Shakhevitch and Amnon Yanai.

The tone of the letter shows that the Druze were becoming an important concern of the Middle East Affairs Department:

> Our vigorous attention is now devoted to those Druze in the villages of western Galilee who are in fact in the neutral zone between our lines and the lines of Qawuqji: Abu Snan, Julis, Yarka and Jath. Our efforts are now directed at keeping them in a neutrality which supports us and is hostile to Qawuqji and to urge them to armed resistance to any attempt by Qawuqji to take them over. For this Druze resistance we will promise them complete support in everything they need.[39]

Shim'oni himself visited the Druze in the western Galilee accompanied by Ezra Danin, in his capacity as Senior Advisor on Arab Affairs at the Foreign Ministry. Shim'oni and Danin knew each other from their days together in Shai in the early to mid-1940s. They were both already acquainted with the Druze issue.

The meeting was part of a move by Palmon, Zayd and Shakhevitch, to bring the issue of the Druze under the active jurisdiction of the Foreign Minister and the Foreign Ministry, thus making the relationship an official part of Israeli government policy. The meeting

is documented in a long report sent by the Middle East Department of the Foreign Ministry to Sharett himself. It was clearly seen as necessary that representatives of the Foreign Ministry themselves met with the Druze, not only in order to submit an official report to the Foreign Minister, but also to legitimize the proceedings in the eyes of the Druze participants and to give the increasingly important Druze–Israeli relationship added weight and momentum:

> Before we as workers of the Foreign Ministry could give the Foreign Minister our impressions, recommendations, and our confirmation of the activities of our four friends [Zayd, Shakhevitch, Palmon, Yanai], we needed to hear directly what the Druze leaders had to say.

The meeting took place in Abu Snan during the last week of August. It was held in an atmosphere of great skulduggery. The Israelis were brought on foot in the dead of night from the village of Kafr Yasif (then occupied by the IDF) to the house of Shaykh Salman Khayr in Abu Snan. Salman Khayr was from the same family as ʻAbdallah Khayr, with whom Ben Tzvi had dealt during the early 1930s.

The Israelis were received into Shaykh Salman's house 'in a clandestine atmosphere of secret whisperings'. The Israelis attending, apart from Shimʻoni and Danin, were Palmon, Tzvi Maklar (from the Political Department of the Foreign Ministry), Amnon Yanai, Shakhevitch, Emmanuel Friedman and Moshe Aliovitz. On the Druze side were Shaykh Salman Khayr from Abu Snan, Shaykh Salman Tarif and Shaykh Farhan Tarif from Julis, and Shaykh Jabr Dahish al-Muʻaddi from Yarka. Shaykh Marzuq was not there 'due to intrigues and internal difficulties among the Druze'. Neither of the villages of Jath or Yanuh was represented; apparently Qawuqji's men had succeeded in entering Jath and Yanuh at that time and had encountered no Druze resistance.[40]

At the meeting Shimʻoni and Danin expressed concern that Qawuqji had been able to enter these villages so easily. In their view it indicated the worrying absence of a coherent and unified Druze position towards the war. But the Druze present at the meeting took pains to convince them that Qawuqji's presence in Yanuh and Jath was less significant than it appeared. According to the Druze, Qawuqji was only in Yanuh to put the Jews off from attacking the strategic

town of Tarshiha (Yanuh was in a topographically commanding position near Tarshiha), and his presence there did not in any way indicate an attempt to gain control over the whole Druze region. As for Jath, the Druze elders said that a few of Qawuqji's men had stayed there briefly but that they had left without winning the support of the population.[41] The Druze present at the meeting also confirmed that should Qawuqji try to enter their own villages they would fight to the bitter end to resist him. Shim'oni, Danin, and the Druze then agreed that if their villages were attacked the IDF would come to their aid both materially and militarily. Troops and supplies would only be provided in the event of an attack. Shaykh Jabr was apparently against this and impatient to gather arms and men immediately:

> Here a controversy broke out amongst the Druze. Shaykh Jabr (the young enthusiast) took his older friends aside and tried to convince them that support in arms and ammunition should not be postponed until the very moment that it is needed but it should be requested immediately. But his friends decided after consulting for about 15 minutes and contrary to his opinion to keep the agreement as made.

The meeting lasted about two hours and ended at 3.30 in the morning. Shaykh Salman Tarif finished the meeting by reiterating the 'absolute faithfulness of the Druze towards the State of Israel' and he specifically asked them to send his personal regards to Sharett.[42]

Contacts with Jabal Druze

Shim'oni and others were also interested in the link that the Druze community in Palestine might provide to Sultan al-Atrash on Jabal Druze. Sultan al-Atrash was known to be in uneasy alliance with the Syrian government and he could be a useful friend in the war effort against the Syrian Army. Hagana informers had also claimed that Sultan al-Atrash had sent word to the Druze in Israel that he was 'content that they should have contacts with the Jews' and that they 'should nurture this relationship because it is in their interests'.[43] Labib Abu Rukn had many contacts in Jabal Druze and Palmon, who considered him to be the most trustworthy Druze contact, sent him

to Sultan al-Atrash in the middle of August 1948 'to see if there [were any] possibilities for a serious and practical co-operation with the Jabal'.[44] It seems however that Labib got stuck in Hasbiyya in southern Lebanon and was unable to continue because he thought he was being followed.[45]

A couple of weeks later a meeting was set up between three Druze from Jabal Druze who claimed to represent Sultan al-Atrash. One of them was Anis Hatum, the Druze who had even in March presented himself (see Chapter 2) as supporting the Israeli war effort and who had offered his services to the Hagana. He had maintained contact with Geura Zayd and Shakhevitch since that time and, according to Shim'oni, 'some practical business' had occurred between him and Geura Zayd. Accompanying him were the Druze Muhanna al-Hatum and Faris al-Dawwar. They travelled from Jabal Druze to Haifa through the Galilee where they met initially with Shakhevitch and Amnon Yanai. A few days later they met with Tzvi Maklar from the Political Department who organized a meeting with Shim'oni and Danin in Tel Aviv. At the Tel Aviv meeting the Druze claimed that the Druze on Jabal Druze were ready to rise up against the Syrian Government if they were given the appropriate military backing by the IDF. They stated that the French government had already approved of their plan and were willing to give the Druze financial support but they would also need support from the Israelis. They claimed to have been in contact with the French for over a year, in particular with Dumercy (the French representative in Amman, who had a year previously held the same position in Damascus). They also stated that they had meetings with Douchle, the French Legate in Beirut. Shim'oni and Danin doubted the validity of these claims:

> When we asked what practical interest the French had in such a rebellion the Druze had no sufficient answer . . . we told the Druze frankly that we would have to confirm this with the French government through our delegate [Elias Sasson] in Paris. We got the impression that our interlocutors did not feel very comfortable about this although they agreed immediately.

Shim'oni later checked up on this contact with the French with Elias Sasson, who at the time was in Paris and was able to snoop around among his contacts in the French government. Sasson found no

evidence to support the Druze's claims. The Druze also maintained that they had the backing of all the opposition groups in Syria, a boast which made Shim'oni and Danin immediately doubt whether these three Druze represented Sultan al-Atrash at all:

> It is hard for us to imagine that so many disparate groups in Syria are able to co-operate and it is also hard for us to imagine that such a wise old rebel as Sultan al-Atrash would share a secret with such a large group of people . . . . when we asked what positive interest there was to unite the Druze and these opposition groups we did not receive a reasonable answer except that of the common will to topple the existing regime in Syria.

The details of the Druze's plan were further evidence to the Israelis of the shaky ground they were embarking upon. The Druze's requests were unrealistic. They wanted to establish an independent Druze army of about 10 000 men and would need 'thousands' of machine guns, rifles, ammunition and so on. They requested 10 million Israeli liras for their expenses. Shim'oni and Danin dismissed this proposal out of hand:

> Under pressure they [the Druze] admitted that they were not authorized to conduct serious negotiations. They strongly requested that a representative from our side should go with them immediately to Jabal Druze in order to conclude the negotiations with the Sultan. We preferred telling them to tell the Sultan the following things and this was accepted as the conclusion of our meeting: there is no doubt of the cordial and faithful covenant of friendship between Israel and the Druze. We are always ready and we shall always be happy to co-operate with them in every practical plan. But we can have practical negotiations only directly with Sultan al-Atrash or with his authorized representatives. Hence we asked him to send, if he wants to co-operate, his representatives to meet our representatives whenever he finds it convenient. We feel that the best place for a meeting would be France.

The Israelis were clearly unhappy with the meeting and felt that there was very little to indicate the genuineness of the Druze claims. Shim'oni concludes his report on the meeting with a few words to

reassure Sharett that no harm had been done in allowing it to go ahead:

> It should be noted that we are not completely confident that the people to whom we talked had really been sent by the Sultan. We are sure, however, that even in the case that they are impostors and adventurers we did not tell them anything that could cause harm.[46]

The mood of the Israeli side concerning the question of links with the mountain seems initially to have been one of caution. It was quite safe to have friendly relations with the Druze in the Galilee, some of whom had been close to the Jews for years. Links with them were based on close relationships between individuals, relationships in which there was a considerable amount of mutual trust. But Sultan al-Atrash was a different matter. He was a citizen of a country with which Israel was at war, and in spite of contacts between him and representatives of the Jewish Agency during the Mandate, there was no guarantee of his pro-Jewish position now. Dealing with him also meant crossing international boundaries with all the dangers such a mission entailed. In addition Sultan himself was a formidable figure who had gained a reputation for courage and leadership from his role in the Druze revolt against the French in 1925. He would be a bad person to have as an enemy if clumsy approaches to him misfired. Both Shim‘oni and Danin were at pains to approach him with caution and only *through* the Israeli Druze: the initiative must be seen to be coming from them.[47] When Labib Abu Rukn was sent by Palmon to try to meet with the Sultan he was instructed to stress that he represented not the Israeli government but the Druze of Israel. As Shim‘oni wrote to Sharett, Labib:

> was sent to Syria in order to convince Sultan al-Atrash, not in our name but in the name of the Druze in Israel, that he has to contact us and that we have to prepare common practical plans.

Indeed, Shim‘oni expressed concern that Labib did not fully understand the importance of this:

> We told Labib that he must try to emphasize again and again that it is not the State of Israel that is asking for help or co-operation

from the Druze but that he as a representative of the Druze in the country try to convince his brothers in the mountain that such a co-operation is needed from a Druze point of view (we had the impression that he did not emphasize this enough on his visit).[48]

Shim'oni was a great believer in the importance of Israeli Arabs as a link to Arabs in the neighbouring states. For him the Druze fitted into this category. There were concerns at the time from prominent members of the Israeli political establishment (especially Sasson) that the Foreign Ministry and not the Ministry for the Minorities was spending so much time on the issue of Israeli Arabs in general and the Druze in particular. In a letter to Sasson, Shim'oni defends the Foreign Ministry's intimate involvement in relations with minority groups within Israel:

> Unfortunately we have no free and easy opportunities to make contact with Arab politicians abroad. Everyone who wants to contact us and everyone whom we want to contact must be contacted only through Israeli Arabs. The same goes for the Druze and other minorities in neighbouring countries. The way to them is through their brothers inside; any clandestine activities that we try to carry out across the border must be done through them.[49]

Labib never made it to Sultan al-Atrash, at least on this visit. As mentioned above, he got stuck in Hasbiyya, afraid to go on because he thought he was being followed. But Labib did send word back that he was trying to arrange a meeting with Zayd al-Atrash, Sultan al-Atrash's brother in Beirut. It is unclear whether or not this meeting took place. The possibility of such a meeting as well as Zayd's apparent willingness forced the Foreign Ministry to confront the international ramifications of the Druze issue. Decisions had to be made concerning how far the Israelis were prepared to go should the al-Atrash family prove ready for some kind of 'practical' co-operation. Shim'oni was very excited about the potential political and military advantages that he thought such co-operation could present. In a letter to Sasson he wrote:

> The possibility of al-Atrash's arrival [in Beirut] has added urgency to the issue that we have been thinking a lot about in recent

> weeks and that we want to bring to Moshe [Sharett] for a final decision: we think that connections with potentially rebellious elements in Syria and at their head of course, the Druze, could cause a serious diversion, stabbing a poisoned dagger into the back of the Arab unity which fights us.

For Shim'oni the Druze were a sharp thorn to be stuck into the side of the Syrian government. A rebellion emanating from the Jabal – just as it had during the French mandate – would destabilize the regime in Damascus and force it to bring home part of its army, then fighting Israel. It was an ambitious plan, but too ambitious for Sharett. Shim'oni laments Sharett's reluctance to engage in such a large-scale endeavour:

> In our meeting with Moshe it was made clear to us that unfortunately due to the economic and budgetary situation of the government we cannot think now of a comprehensive and large program in this direction. On the other hand Moshe gave us permission to continue with the contacts and talks in order to examine the possibilities of activities in the same vein but on a smaller scale. We will endeavour to continue in this direction although the big political profit that we had hoped for by engaging in wide-scale activities cannot be expected from small and limited initiatives.[50]

Shim'oni's grandiose plans were shelved. Sharett had a reputation for carefulness which was in sharp contrast to Ben Gurion's aggressively interventionist outlook.[51]

Sharett's caution was well founded. By that stage the IDF was doing well in the war, and the Arab armies, particularly in the north, did not pose the threat they had a few months previously. To spend time and money on an initiative which involved establishing dangerous links across international borders with someone whose trustworthiness could not be guaranteed would indeed have been foolish, given the fact that Israel was winning the war anyway. Had the military balance been reversed at that time and had Sharett needed an alternative and drastic strategy to turn the tide of the war back in Israel's favour, things might have been very different.

For his part Sultan al-Atrash was at least publicly proclaiming Druze unity with the Arab cause. Rumours of Druze treachery spread through the Arab political community in Damascus, with stories filtering back

to Damascus that the Druze in Israel had refused to co-operate with Qawuqji and made secret deals with the Jews. The performance of the Druze battalion in the ALA back in April and the ensuing talk of secret agreements between Shakib Wahab and the Israelis also contributed to the atmosphere of mistrust that existed between Damascus and the Jabal. One Hagana report stated that the Syrian government suspected Shakib Wahab of treason, but that they were too afraid of Druze unrest to arrest him.[52] At the beginning of September Sultan al-Atrash gave an interview to the Syrian daily *al-Nasr*. In the interview he spouted the appropriate rhetoric about Arab unity:

> As a man we must rise up to protect the heritage of our national home bequeathed to us by our forefathers. We have two options: life in honour after expelling the enemy from our lands, or death with honour on the altar of freedom.

When asked about the rumours that the Druze in Palestine were not co-operating with the Arab armies Sultan defended the Druze and made clear his own position on the matter:

> I deny these charges because the Druze are not known for cowardice and treason and it is in their nature to rise up against oppressors . . . we will not tolerate the Druze being described as negligent. I have written to the Druze notables [in Palestine] and called upon them to stand beside their brethren in the country and to fight with their usual courage.[53]

Although Sultan naturally felt obliged to make a public denial of charges of Druze 'treachery', there is nothing concrete in the documentary material to indicate that he would have said anything different in private. The Zionists were doubtless interested in making contact with him during this period, but Palestinian Druze assurances that Sultan was equally enthusiastic may have reflected Palestinian Druze needs more than Sultan's actual position.

Contacts with the Druze on Mount Hermon

There is evidence in the documents that some separate contacts were made between the Israelis and the Druze living in Mount Hermon,

then part of Syria, and now (since the Israeli capture of the Golan Heights in 1967) occupied by Israel. For the Israelis these contacts did not carry nearly as much political promise as those with the al-Atrash family on Jabal Druze. The Druze on Jabal Druze were a significant political force in Syria and their brethren on Mount Hermon did not hold nearly the same degree of political influence. The Mount Hermon Druze initiated contacts on the basis of the fact that their villages lay right on the border between Syria and Israel, and they wanted to secure the safety of their villages in the event of battles on the border. According to a Hagana intelligence report, a meeting occurred on 30 June 1948 between Emmanuel Friedman (an official of the Middle East Department of the Foreign Ministry who was later present at the August meeting in Abu Snan between Shim'oni and the Druze of the western Galilee) and two prominent Druze from Mount Hermon, Farhan Sha'alan from 'Ayn Kenya and Muhammad Safadi from Majd al-Shams.

The two men claimed that they represented the majority of the Druze community living on Mount Hermon and that they wanted some kind of co-operation, specifically a certificate or declaration which they could present to the IDF should the Israelis attempt to occupy their villages. The Israeli relationship with the Druze of 'Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal was clearly well known to them and they talked of the positive impact this relationship had had on the Druze community as a whole. In return for Israeli guarantees concerning the safety of their villages they offered to try to spread favourable propaganda 'outside Druze circles' about the advantages the Druze of Mount Carmel had accrued from their friendly relations with the Israelis. Complaining about the lack of such pro-Israel propaganda, they pointed out that the Syrians' anti-Israel propaganda was so strong that 'there is no echo outside the Druze community of the proper actions [of the Israelis]'. They therefore suggested that they be allowed to distribute pamphlets in Arabic throughout Syria to counter those Syrian pamphlets which spoke of Israeli ruthlessness and lack of mercy.[54] It is unclear from the report whether this meeting led to any further developments, although another report sent to Shim'oni includes Shim'oni's further hand-written recommendation to Sharett that he supply the aforementioned declaration to protect the Druze from the IDF:

> Mr. Shertok – I suggest that you give the requested declaration to the people who are dealing with the connections between us and the Druze. The declaration should be signed by you. If you agree I am ready to give you a suggested draft.[55]

There are also later indications that Farhan Sha'alan may have been involved in the Israeli attempts to contact Sultan al-Atrash six weeks later. A later Hagana report states that Asad and Sultan Kanj informed the Syrian government that the two Druze 'made contact with the Jews', and that towards the end of July a Syrian Intelligence officer was sent to Majd al-Shams to look for them. The report does not say whether he found them, but it talked of a 'growing atmosphere of tension between the two sides in the Druze villages on the Hermon'.[56]

It is curious that Asad and Sultan Kanj should have informed Syrian intelligence of the pro-Jewish activities of other Druze in the Mount Hermon region; after all, they themselves had been in contact with the Jews in the 1930s.[57] This affair perhaps reflects the way in which individual Druze used the issue of contacts with the Jews as a weapon in internal disputes between different Druze families. Those Israelis involved in forging links with the Druze on Mount Hermon may have been unaware of this. There is no documentary evidence indicating that Israeli contacts with the Druze on Mount Hermon were ever anything more than tentative.

4
The Druze in the New State, July–October 1948

This chapter focuses on the incorporation of certain sections of the Druze communities of ‘Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal into the State of Israel during the final phase of the war. In particular, I shall examine the establishment of a Druze unit in the IDF (whose volunteers were mainly drawn from ‘Isfiya and Daliya) as well as the benefits that the existence of this unit brought to the two villages. Also covered in this chapter is the battle of Yanuh, in which the Druze unit found themselves fighting against fellow Druze, and its aftermath.

The Druze unit

The information available about the recruitment of Druze into the IDF is scant because a great deal of the archival material relating to the Druze unit (or the Unit of the Minorities as it came to be called) remains classified. It is still a sensitive topic since today nearly all Druze serve in the IDF, a service which, more than any other factor, distinguishes them from other Israeli Arab communities, both in Arab and in Jewish eyes.[1]

The origins of Druze participation in the IDF can be traced to the agreements, discussed previously, between Shai agents and Shakib Wahab and his officers after the battle of Ramat Yohanan. At that meeting, in Kiryat Amal on 20 April 1948, the Druze officers proposed that anyone from their battalion who wanted, be absorbed into the Carmeli Brigade. Moshe Dayan, who with Geura Zayd represented the Israeli side, was reluctant. As far as Dayan was concerned,

it was still early days in the growing relationship between the Druze and Yishuv. His own brother had been killed only a few days earlier at Ramat Yohanan by the very men who were now volunteering to join him. The decision whether or not to recruit the Druze was postponed by the Israelis, but the important thing is that the idea had been mooted for the first time. Isma'il Qabalan and Khalil Bashir Quntar, both present at that meeting, served six months later in the Druze company that participated in Operation Hiram, the final Israeli conquest of the Galilee.[2]

The recruitment of Druze into the army began during the first truce, in late June and early July, when the first recruits were brought for training to Lod, near the airstrip. The first Druze unit comprised two platoons, one consisting of officers and troops from Shakib Wahab's old battalion, and under the command of Assaf Katz. The other was made up of about thirty volunteers from 'Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal whom Geura Zayd, with the help of Mordecai Shakhevitch, Salih Khanayfis and Labib Abu Rukn, had recruited in the previous few weeks. In the early stages these two platoons officially constituted a unit attached to Battalion 89, then under the command of Yitzhak Sadeh, although later they were reassigned to Unit 300 which was commanded by Tuvia Lishansky.

The two platoons were very different in nature. The platoon made up of veterans of the Druze battalion of the ALA, mainly from the Jabal, was more professional. Nearly all these men had fought in the battle for Ramat Yohanan, many of them having served previously under Shakib. In contrast, the men from the Carmel who constituted the majority of the other platoon were villagers with little or no military training. Their differing backgrounds apparently caused tension between the two Druze platoons during training. In a later interview Assaf Katz stated that the Druze officers from the Jabal were uncomfortable being trained with 'these shepherds and peasants', referring to the villagers from 'Isfiya and Daliya.[3]

The establishment of the two Druze platoons was a radical step for the Israelis, and one with at least as many political as military ramifications. Militarily, a couple more platoons would not make a decisive difference to the Israeli war effort. But in political terms, the incorporation into the IDF of an Arabic-speaking unit, half of whose members had been fighting on the enemy's side only a few weeks before, was bound to prove a difficult manoeuvre.

The political advantages of such a recruitment were significant, however. As far as the Palestinian Druze themselves were concerned, the recruitment of villagers from ‘Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal into the IDF marked a final step from which the Druze could not retreat. The definitiveness of the Druze move was not lost on the Israelis. In a long report written in August by Yehoshua Palmon for the Foreign Ministry detailing Israeli activities amongst the Druze, the recruitment is discussed in these terms:

> We started recruiting from amongst the people of Daliya and ‘Isfiya at their own request; they and some of Shakib Wahab's people who joined the unit are a unit of 60 people. Of course, there is no going back [for them] on this act.[4]

The international ramifications of having Syrian Druze serve in the IDF were highlighted by Shim‘oni in one of his letters to Sasson. He saw these men as potentially useful in his effort to use the Druze in Syria as ‘a poisoned dagger to stab into the back of Arab unity’. He also thought that they could be used as a link to bring other Syrian Druze over to the IDF:

> Along with these attempts to contact the Druze in the mountain and to activate them we continue our reconnaissance activities to draw more Druze units from the Syrian army to us. It is possible that these reconnaissance activities will succeed in the near future. Such things are also starting with the Circassians (it is clear that the Druze and Circassian units which already exist in the IDF are the link and the springboard).

For this reason Shim‘oni was determined to keep the question of Druze recruitment under the authority of the Foreign Ministry. To him the Druze were a political, not a military issue.

Once again the tension between the army (including army intelligence) and the Foreign Ministry surrounding the issue of the Druze and their co-operation with Israel, may be detected in Shim‘oni's remarks:

> There is a big debate between us and army intelligence about the question of whether after having them join the army we still have

> the right to say anything about the way they are being dealt with and treated, or if at the moment we hand them over to the army our job is done. There is no question that regarding the issue of recruiting more Druze we and only we should decide from which region and which people are recruited to the army. But in reality, and to our displeasure, army intelligence and local commanders are getting involved in it. Shim'oni's concerns echo Palmon's threat to resign, made several weeks earlier, over the involvement of army intelligence officer Haim Aurbah in the negotiations with Druze villagers from the western Galilee.[5]

In the event the army did agree that the setting up of the company should be co-ordinated with the Foreign Ministry:

> Considering the fact that making use of this company must be considered politically and militarily, the commander of the company is being appointed in consultation with the Political Department of the Foreign Ministry.[6]

When Tuvia Lishansky was appointed commander of the Druze company, Shim'oni made sure he kept in close contact with him in order to guarantee his intimate involvement in any decisions made concerning the unit. In a memo from Shim'oni to Lishansky, written at the beginning of September, Shim'oni refers to a verbal exchange between the two men concerning the recruitment of more Druze from the Syrian army.[7] In the memo Shim'oni is at pains to point out that officially, at least, Lishansky must obtain approval for any more recruitment through army channels: 'You must receive the answer from those responsible for the matter in the army and your superiors, if there is agreement on the part of the army to receive such additional recruits.'

At the same time he is obviously eager that Lishansky report back to him with details on the number of Druze who were 'potentially available', on their 'identity and nature', and on the way in which they wanted to 'come over'. Shim'oni also believed it essential that he and Lishansky meet weekly 'in order to clear up matters in a comprehensive way', and that Ezra Danin should also be present at those meetings.[8] This memo is clear evidence that the Foreign Ministry was keen not to lose its ability to monitor the progress of Druze

recruitment into the army. For Shim'oni, of course, the question of the Druze had always been important because of the link to their brethren in Syria. They thus continued to be a legitimate foreign policy concern and he was naturally worried lest the Druze question as a whole simply disappear under the umbrella of the army and army intelligence.

The recruitment of the Druze from Daliya and 'Isfiya caused a certain amount of local tension as well. In late July, during the initial stages of recruitment, Druze from 'Isfiya who had joined up were said to have surrounded the houses of Christians living there and in Daliya and to have confiscated all their weapons. One report says that they shot at a local church bell, 'which caused great anger amongst the Christians'. In addition, a Muslim from Majd al-Kurum was killed in Yarka after the Muslim had accused a Druze of 'betraying the Muslims'.

The preferential treatment given by the Minorities Ministry and the army to the families of those who had volunteered may have exacerbated these tensions. In particular, the Druze were able to obtain licences (for example, to travel, and to transport and sell food) more readily than their neighbours in the region. It is not too difficult to imagine the impact of seeing Druze soldiers enjoying the perks that came with army service. For these Druze soldiers there was no going back. By joining the army they had created the basis for an entirely new, public collaboration with the Jews, both in terms of their more formal relationship with the State and in terms of the subsequent alienation from their neighbours, which in turn was to push them further into the State's embrace.[9]

The institutionalization of ties: 'Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal

The documentary evidence suggests that the recruitment of Druze from 'Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal coincided with preferential treatment towards the Druze community in general. For the Druze the concrete manifestation of this was the granting of permits to move about freely, to harvest their fields, to bring in provisions from the cities, and to set up schools. These activities seem to have been carried out most openly in 'Isfiya and Daliya, which had the strongest connections with the Israelis. The Abu Rukn family from 'Isfiya were

considered by many in Israeli intelligence to be the most valuable link to the Druze, and it was from Daliya and ʻIsfiya that the majority of volunteers into the IDF had been drawn. Salih Khanayfis was of course also prominent in establishing good relations, but he came from Shafaʻamr, which had certainly proved its loyalty during Operation Dekel but which still had a substantial number of Christian and Muslim inhabitants. The question of preferential treatment for Shafaʻamr as a town was therefore more complicated.

The Druze as a whole had been given preferential treatment when it came to the issue of harvesting. Permission to harvest crops was used by the government as a political weapon in the late summer of 1948. Benny Morris states that 'the prevention of the Arab harvest was used as a tool of policy by the Israeli authorities *vis-à-vis* those Arabs who had preferred to remain in the Jewish state rather than go into exile'. He goes on to quote an official of the Israeli Foreign Ministry on the question of the Druze and their harvest; 'In many parts of the country the matter of collecting the harvest served as an important card in our hands. It was not without worth that the Druze in the north of the country were allowed to reap their crops while their neighbouring villages were barred from doing so and they are wandering around hungry'.[10]

Mordecai Shakhevitch, operating mainly in Daliya and ʻIsfiya, encouraged the growth of these links between the Druze and the State. On 22 July 1948 the notables of ʻIsfiya sent a letter to Bechor Shitrit, the recently appointed Minister of Minorities. Shitrit was the only Sephardic Minister in the first Israeli government and in general showed himself to be relatively liberal when it came to the Palestinian issue.

The Druze letter was delivered by Shakhevitch and written by Labib Abu Rukn and Najib Mansur, who was the Mukhtar of ʻIsfiya at that time:

> We the Mukhtar and the notables of ʻIsfiya in the region of Haifa have the honour to present to Your Excellency the following things: due to your nomination as Minister of Minorities we want to express to Your Excellency our great happiness and heartfelt gladness that you have received this lofty post which you deserve and are suited for since you are well known for your indulgence, honesty and your good character and heart regarding others.

After this preamble the Druze go on to make a series of requests concerning schools, water, electricity, security, food supplies, upkeep of roads, and so on.[11] The language of the letter (which seems flowery in an English translation but which is really just an example of the stylized preamble found in Arabic letter writing when the addressee is someone in a position of authority) is less important than the nature of the requests: these reveal a certain confidence and expectation. The Druze were eager to reap the rewards of their policy of co-operation, and Israelis such as Shakhevitch knew that granting these special privileges would further bind the Druze to the state and make any kind of political retreat on the part of the Druze impossible.

These special privileges caused a certain degree of tension. For example, it was relatively easy for Druze from Daliya and ‘Isfiya to travel in and out of Haifa. This resulted in the military commander of the city complaining that certain ‘undesirables’ were operating freely there: ‘It has come to my attention that various people from Daliya and ‘Isfiya are unwanted and have received documents that permit them to enter the town in any way. This is not desirable.’

Jewish doctors from Haifa were told by Moshe Yitah, the director of the Haifa branch of the Minority Affairs Ministry, to look after the sick in Daliya and ‘Isfiya. In particular, Yitah asks two Jewish doctors to attend to the families of the Druze soldiers recruited into the IDF:

> Enclosed is a list of the Druze who are recruits in the army of Israel [and] whose families live in these villages. I would like you to take care of the sick people from the families who are on the list for a minimal fee and if you find it acceptable even for a token fee in order to help the families of the soldiers.

Plans were also made to set up a school in Daliya and ‘Isfiya, and Yitah intervened personally with the military authorities on such matters as getting Druze released from military prisons.[12]

At the end of August committees were set up in both villages ‘to run the business of the village and to receive and distribute supplies’. Shakhevitch was chosen to be the chairman of the committee in both villages. There is some evidence that the committees were set up to control the growth of profiteering in the villages. In his memo to Minority Affairs headquarters in Tel Aviv, Yitah states:

> We can direct the energies of the people towards developing the villages and helping the needy. It should be noted that the choosing of the committee was done out of good will and the understanding of the need for a committee which will take care of the village and will change the past legacy when one person or one man reaped gain from the general populace at their expense.[13]

Yitah however was concerned about Shakhevitch's role on the committees and felt that it would be better if they were run entirely by the Druze themselves. According to Yitah, Shakhevitch wanted to keep the committees 'under his thumb'. It is interesting to note that the secretary of the committee in 'Isfiya was a member of the Abu Rukn family. The whole arrangement seemed slightly too cosy to Yitah, who was worried lest profiteering continue in the village. With Shakhevitch as head of the committees, both his name and the name of the Minority Affairs Ministry could be 'stained'. Shakhevitch however remained on the committees despite Yitah's concerns.[14]

In the middle of October, upon the appointment of a new military governor in the western Galilee, Shakhevitch wrote to Shitrit in an attempt to ensure that the new governor did not cause trouble when it came to the pro-Druze policy of the Haifa branch of the Minority Affairs Ministry:

> We [think] that it is essential that the military governor should be in contact with the minority office and consult its employees who have a great deal of experience in the affairs of the community. . . . I would like to emphasize one problem which happily is already clear to my teacher and rabbi Mr Shitrit: the Druze problem. We have been 'flirting'[15] with this community and until today we have hit the mark. As with every work of this kind, we cannot estimate to what degree the community will co-operate with us until the last minute. We do not delude ourselves. It is possible that some of the people connected with us look sideways now and then, but if we stop to think and understand their position and their ties across the border and the situation of the villages between the lines, we will have to sympathize; at least let us use the opportunities where they exist. We want to repeat and state that the Druze are not Muslims, not in their customs and not in their character. To our regret the people who decide on government

> lines or military actions concerning this community are ignoring this problem that is of the utmost importance. In light of this it is desired that the military governor in our area will receive the appropriate hint that co-operation with our people will not harm his agenda but quite the contrary.[16]

Shakhevitch's comments show that mistrust of the Druze still prevailed in the army, in spite of their co-operation during the battle for Shafa'amr, and in spite of the fact that some Druze were already serving in the IDF. His insistence on differentiating the Druze from Muslims also indicates the degree to which the Druze were still seen as being part of the Muslim Arab camp and echoes Danin's earlier mistrust of Druze motivations.

The battle of Yanuh[17]

Most of the training of the Druze unit went on from mid-July to mid-October, during the period of the second truce. The Israelis used this period to reorganize their army: to establish regional commands, to reassign battalions to new areas, and to restructure the general staff. Recruitment in general was also stepped up. All of this activity was part of Ben Gurion's preparation for a break in the truce so that he could build on the military achievements of the 'ten-days war'. The official recruitment and training of the Druze unit took place against this backdrop. The Druze were to be deployed in the north in Operation Hiram, the final push to dislodge the remaining ALA forces from the Galilee.

By the beginning of October the truce in the south was effectively broken by an escalation of local skirmishes between Israeli and Egyptian forces, and on 15 October the IDF launched Operation Yoav in order to push the Egyptians back to the border. In the north the truce was broken on 22 October when the ALA stormed the Shaykh 'Abbad hilltop overlooking Kibbutz Manara. Qawuqji, whose standing had been badly undermined by his defeats during the ten days' war, was determined to capture at least one Jewish settlement. A bloody attempt to dislodge him failed and four Israeli brigades were sent to protect Manara. One week later, on 29 October, Operation Hiram was launched. The focus of the operation was on the upper Galilee pocket still held by Qawuqji's forces. This pocket was bounded

by the villages of Yanuh and Majd al-Kurum in the west, by ‘Ilabun, Dayr al-Hanna and Sakhnin in the south, by Farradiyya, Qaddita, Alam and Malkiyya in the east and by the Lebanese border in the north. The Oded Brigade, to which the Druze unit had been assigned, was given the task of attacking from the west and of taking the central part of the pocket, including the town of Tarshiha where many of Qawuqji’s forces were concentrated.

For this particular operation the Druze company was commanded by Yonatan Abrahamson, with the platoon of Druze from the Jabal commanded by the aforementioned Assaf Katz. Abrahamson was an old army man who had served in the Frontier Force during the Mandate. Katz, the junior of the two officers, came from Yagur and since July had been helping train the platoon at the camp at Lod. He was apparently quite popular with his troops, and was said to have gone out with them in the evenings after training and to have danced the dabka, a traditional Syrian and Palestinian dance; in other words, to have behaved as ‘one of them’.[18] Serving as his sergeant was Salih Quntar from Jabal Druze, one of Shakib’s ex-officers present back in April at the first tentative meeting between the Druze officers and Moshe Dayan.

The village of Yanuh, with an almost entirely Druze population, is situated in the hills to the south of Tarshiha. Occupied at that time by Qawuqji’s forces, Yanuh was to be captured as the first step of the Oded Brigade’s effort to take Tarshiha. Unsurprisingly, the Druze company was assigned the task of taking Yanuh. The story of the battle that took place there is confused, although the following can be stitched together from the various conflicting accounts.

On the night of 28 October the Druze company led by Abrahamson captured (as planned) a dugout of ALA troops sitting on the ridge above Yanuh and took a dozen of them as prisoners. The company was then welcomed enthusiastically by the Druze villagers who, according to most accounts, had concluded a prior agreement with the IDF. A parallel Oded attack on Giv‘at Hasalim, which also stood in a commanding position over Tarshiha, failed because the approach was more heavily mined than anticipated. The result was that the company had to withdraw temporarily and regroup. The Druze company sitting above Yanuh was not informed of this withdrawal because of a breakdown in wireless communications.

Meanwhile Qawuqji, encouraged by the IDF retreat, reattacked Yanuh, and was apparently joined in the attack by the villagers of

Yanuh and Jath. In this counterattack, three Jewish officers and 13 Druze from the IDF were killed, and the company was only able to withdraw after battalion headquarters had rushed in artillery reinforcements. As a result Tarshiha was taken 24 hours later than planned and not by the Oded Brigade but by the Seventh Brigade which approached from the rear via Sa‘sa‘. So although the final objective of the attack was achieved, it seems that the battle for Yanuh itself was something of a fiasco.

The central question – over which there is much speculation in the sources – concerns the behaviour of the Druze villagers in Yanuh, and to a lesser extent the behaviour of the inhabitants of the smaller Druze village of Jath, next to Yanuh. The behaviour of these villagers took on a particular importance after the war was over when the Druze community as a whole was beginning to reap the rewards of its co-operation with the State. Yanuh and Jath were made to stand apart from all other Druze villages and were penalized for their actions. It is very difficult to understand what really happened given the various axes the different actors had to grind.

The agreement concluded between the Druze of Yanuh and the IDF before the battle is pivotal to the events that unfolded. The plan clearly fell apart and after the battle accusations flew as to whose fault it was. The seeds of the pact were planted back in August when an intelligence officer attached to the Seventh Brigade met with an unnamed Druze (most probably Jabr Dahash Mu’addi or Salih Khanayfis) in order to discuss how the Druze could help the IDF capture Yanuh, which was then in ALA hands. The intelligence officer reports the proposal of his Druze interlocutor:

> His suggestion is that a unit of our soldiers shall leave from Yekhi‘am with a Druze guide whom the Shaykh is willing to provide. This unit shall stop some distance from Yanuh and open fire. The Druze residents of the village shall immediately leave it to a distance of 1–2 kilometres. [Blank] is convinced that the garrison shall surrender after our forces approach the village. He himself shall be in the village that night in order to transfer it to our control. He is ready to put this plan into action whenever we demand it of him. According to him we should do this for several reasons:
>
> 1) they [the ALA] have begun to build a road from Tarshiha to Yanuh in order to transfer guns there so as to bombard Yekhi‘am;

> 2) lately units from Qawuqji's army have been harassing the Druze and preventing them from selling beef to the Jews.
>
> The pressure on the Druze villages of Yarka, Julis, Jath and Abu Snan is intensifying every day. According to [blank] the conquest of Yanuh by us will give our troops a commanding position over Tarshiha and a convenient base from which to conquer it.[19]

There is evidence that approximately one month before the launching of Operation Hiram, during the second truce, a firm agreement between the Seventh Brigade and the Druze villages in the Galilee was reached. An army memo sent at the end of September 1948 from the 'Investigation Division' and marked 'Top Secret' documents the agreement. This memo is addressed to 'Yadin', almost certainly Yigal Yadin, Chief of Operations at this time and a few months later to replace Ya'cov Dori as Chief of Staff. The document states:

> At the request of the Seventh Brigade we have reached an agreement with some of the Druze villages in the jurisdiction area of the Liberation Army [the ALA] on their position in the event of renewed fighting in the western Galilee. The arrangement was handled by Hagai Buri.
>
> 1) Julis, Yarka[20] and Abu Snan will be neutral in any action we will take.
> 2) Yanuh and Jath will be invaded by us through agreement and arrangement with the inhabitants. The nature of the action will resemble the Shafa'amr take-over. We think that the odds are for success.[21]

This agreement took place over a month before Operation Hiram was launched, by which time the situation on the ground had changed. Most sources agree that despite this no attempt was made to resurrect the plan until the day before the attack on Yanuh. Amnon Yanai stated in a later interview that there had been a meeting, attended by both Shakhevitch and Khanayfis, the day before the battle:

> The day before action, we made contact with Shaykh Jabr Mu'addi from Yarka and we requested that he tell the people of the village [by getting a message to them] that we are coming and that they should organize a friendly reception committee for the IDF.

The loyalty of Jabr al-Mu'addi was later called into question, and there is some suggestion that he delivered the message straight into the hands of the ALA. Yanai stated later that: 'A serious suspicion arose that he [Mu'addi] had sent the note to the ALA and there was a view that he was fooling both sides.'[22]

There are other versions of the story, however. One is that the messenger was captured by the ALA and that he surrendered the note to them. The Syrian commander in the village, Fathi Bey, had put the villagers under a great deal of pressure to participate in the attack on the IDF. Khayr Amir, a villager from Yanuh, reported that the inhabitants were forced to fight by the ALA, claiming that he was ordered to go from house to house on the 28th in order to bring out all the young men to battle: 'In our battle there was not a single person with the ALA and only out of fear for our lives did we go out into battle.'

Salman Faraj, another Yanuh resident, denied that the villagers knew anything about a previous arrangement, and that they were forced by the ALA to fight with them:

> The ALA forced us to fight on their side. We were also afraid of the people of Tarshiha – they were approximately 5000 Muslims and we were a village of 600 people alone. No one knew that there were Druze fighters on the Jewish side.[23]

There is indeed some evidence that at the very beginning of the battle, just after the Druze company had captured the enemy trenches on the ridge above Yanuh and taken the 12 Syrian soldiers inside prisoner, some of the Druze villagers did come out to welcome the IDF. But the counterattack from Qawuqji's forces came quickly and there is also evidence that Druze villagers were involved in that counterattack. Several Israelis involved in the battle even claimed that ALA soldiers advanced behind the cover of Druze villagers (including women and children) pretending to surrender, in order to trick the IDF. Aria 'Amit, an Israeli soldier who took part in the battle, reported that after the enemy trenches had been captured he talked with Assaf Katz, who had gone ahead, on the field wireless:

> Assaf said to me: 'Women and children are coming out of the village'; I said: 'Shoot first, then investigate'; he said: 'I can't shoot

> women and children'. After that he was cut off; he was close to the village, 300 meters from our position. Suddenly our soldiers started to run shouting: 'Treachery, treachery!'

A chaotic retreat followed. Katz and Abrahamson had been killed in the counterattack and the chain of command broke down. Najib Abu Rukn from 'Isfiya, who was in the Druze company and present at the battle, related that during the retreat they tried to shout across to the Druze of Yanuh to show that they were Druze:

> During the withdrawal we came under heavy attack, and thinking that they [the attackers] were Druze we called across to them a well known Druze oath. In response they fired upon us. I did not see women or children in the theatre of battle. When we reached 'Amqa the soldiers felt a burning desire to take revenge on the people of Yanuh. The Jewish commanders restrained us.[24]

Whatever actually transpired at Yanuh, Israeli sources – both primary and secondary – have portrayed the battle and the ensuing IDF losses as due in part to the 'treachery' of the Druze villagers. In his memoir of the war, Moshe Carmel speaks of the villagers' 'shocking and incredible betrayal'.[25] Carmel's judgement reflects the almost total acceptance by the Israeli military community at that time (Carmel was writing in 1949) that the Druze in general were 'on their side'. It was against this assumption that the behaviour of the villagers at Yanuh the previous autumn was regarded as such a betrayal, as such an exception to the rule. This IDF perception was to colour the relationship between Yanuh (and neighbouring Jath) and the Israeli authorities in the months following the battle, during the transition from war to peace when the Palestinian Druze as a whole were brought more and more under the official umbrella of the State.

In January 1949, after the fighting in the north had died out, the question of opening a school in Yanuh came up in the Ministry of the Minorities. Yehuda Blum, the Minister for Education, gave a clear indication of official policy towards Yanuh and Jath when, in a memo to Y. Burlah of Minority Affairs, he stated:

> As is well known the village Yanuh is one of the two Druze villages that betrayed us. To the best of my knowledge the military

> authority is not 'taking care of' [his inverted commas] these two villages. If the policy of the government towards these villages changes I would like to know so that I can take care of the question of the children's education.[26]

The precise nature of what 'taking care of' the Druze involved, will be explored in the next chapter.

Not long after the battle, the question of organizing a *sulha* (reconciliation) between the IDF and the villages of Yanuh and Jath was raised.[27] Moshe Yitah, head of the Minority Affairs office in Haifa and sympathetic to the Druze cause, realized the importance of soothing the bad feeling caused at Yanuh. He knew that the Druze had to feel that the casualties they sustained there were not being treated lightly just because they were Druze.[28] He voiced his concern a few days after the battle in a letter to Shitrit:

> During the battles in the Galilee the Druze company suffered several casualties in the village of Yanuh. These casualties were a result of an exchange of fire between the Druze of the village and the Druze soldiers on our side . . . it appears that these casualties were avoidable. This incident might leave a very bad impression with the Druze and in my opinion an immediate investigation should be launched to find out the reasons for the incident. The importance of this justifies that you investigate it personally and I suggest that you tie it in to your trip to Haifa next week.[29]

It appears to have been decided that if a reconciliation were to happen it should be conducted between representatives of the IDF and the Druze involved. A later memo sent to Yitah concerning complaints lodged with the Minority Affairs Ministry over the results of the *sulha* seems to imply that the Ministry was unwilling to get involved and felt that at least officially the matter should be resolved between the army and the Druze: 'Since the Druze company's losses were caused in a military operation during the occupation of the Galilee we do not find any reason for the intervention of a civil inter-ministerial committee to investigate the issue.'[30]

Ya'cov Barazani was selected for the job of negotiator between the two sides. Barazani was a friend of Ezra Danin's and was active in military intelligence. His origins were Kurdish so he was considered

to have an understanding of Arab tradition and he was also an accomplished Arabist. According to his biographers it was he who persuaded the IDF not to take reprisal actions against Yanuh and Jath in the wake of the battle, convincing them to push for a *sulha* instead. Apparently a week after the battle Ezra Danin informed Barazani of IDF plans for a reprisal attack and Barazani dissuaded him on the basis of the fact that to mount a planned revenge attack 'a week after the killings when the blood has turned cold and there has been time to consider the evidence ... is against the laws of blood revenge followed by the Arabs'.[31]

Barazani was helped by the usual gallery of personalities involved in the question of Druze–Jewish relations: Shakhevitch, Palmon, Zayd, Khanayfis and Labib Abu Rukn. The Unit of the Minorities was also closely involved, particularly Tuvia Lishansky's deputy, Major Sasson, who, like Barazani was of Kurdish origin. Barazani knew of the need to proceed carefully and sensitively through the preparations for the *sulha*. He met with Druze leaders from all the prominent Druze villages and according to his biographers was constantly aware of the need 'to reiterate again and again that for the State of Israel there [was] no difference between the Druze soldiers who were killed and the Jewish soldiers who had fallen in battle'.[32]

The very fact that Barazani felt that this insistence was necessary indicates the degree to which the Druze were felt to be 'on the Jewish side'. He is reported to have said to the father of one of the Druze soldiers killed at Yanuh that his son was as much a son of the IDF as of his, and that his unit wanted reparation and justice for his death as much as he did.[33] Barazani and those advising him recognized the need to keep the support of the Druze. He knew how significant the IDF's response to Druze deaths would be in the Druze community, particularly because those who had died came from 'Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal, the heartland of Druze pro-Israeli sentiment. It was important that the friends of Israel in these two villages were not made to feel that they had been betrayed by the State.

Although the war in the north had been won, the Israelis found themselves in occupation of an uprooted and mainly hostile population. Refugees who had not fled across the border were moving from village to village inside Palestine and those who had fled were, in many cases, trying to return. The Israelis recognized the potential usefulness of their relations with the Druze for the months to come.

The *sulha* was eventually concluded at an official ceremony a few weeks after the battle. The ceremony was held at the camp of the Unit of the Minorities and was attended by officers from the Unit and representatives of the Druze community. A fine was levied on the villagers of Jath and Yanuh for the death of every soldier, for each of the 12 Druze killed and for the 3 Jewish officers killed.[34] Interestingly, the families of the Jews that had been killed did not attend the *sulha* and Barazani, in a flamboyant and last-minute gesture, refused to accept the fine for the Jewish families, dividing their share up amongst the Druze. This was explained by Barazani in his speech to the *sulha* gathering as a warning to the Druze that the Jews could not be easily placated, and that they could not have their honour 'bought':

> Since you turned to the Prime Minister asking for a *sulha* and the State of Israel came to me to make sure it will occur, I am forced to reach some arrangement with you to make up for what you did. According to the tradition you will have to pay a fine. When I spoke with Shaykh Abu Rukn he said that the Druze have honour. Do you know what honour is? The honour of the Jewish people? Do you think that you can buy us and our honour with money? Know that the IDF does not easily forgive deeds of betrayal. The IDF has time, even if it has not reacted immediately; it still does not mean that we have forgotten. We have time and memory. Even if we hurt you in another 40 years for what you did the Jewish people will say that we acted fast, that we could have waited another forty years.[35]

This threat was obviously directed at those Druze from Yanuh and Jath who had participated in 'the betrayal'. But for Barazani's Druze allies there must have been an irritating and obvious contradiction between his telling them that there was no difference between the life of a Jewish soldier and that of a Druze, and the triumphalist scorn he heaped on the concept of accepting money as reparation for Jewish life.

The successful conclusion of the *sulha* did, however, achieve Israel's aims of drawing the Druze community further into the Jewish camp. After the *sulha*, enlistment of Druze volunteers into the IDF increased, and some leaders in the Druze community began to call for the recruitment of Druze to become obligatory.

The villagers of Jath were unhappy that as a result of the *sulha* a fine was levied on them as well as on the villagers of Yanuh. They were keen in the aftermath of the battle to distance themselves from their brethren in Yanuh and their 'betrayal'. In a letter to Shitrit in mid-November they complained that the fine was unjust:

> The general command of the IDF levied a fine of IS1000 on our village as a result of our [alleged] rebellion against our brothers and allies the IDF. There is no basis for this accusation, it is nothing but propaganda . . . we are absolutely sure that no Jew was killed within the boundaries of our village . . . we did not co-operate with the ALA, we helped our brothers in the IDF.

They go on to list pieces of evidence that proved their allegiance to the IDF, including hiding a Druze IDF soldier from ALA forces.[36] It is unclear what the truth of Jath's role in the battle was, although Shakhevitch had no doubts about their guilt. In a memo on the subject that he sent to the Minority Affairs Ministry in Tel Aviv he stated:

> I must comment that it is clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that the residents of the village Jath co-operated with the enemy during the attack and even killed soldiers of the IDF. The same behaviour was also true for the village of Yanuh which may in the future make similar complaints.[37]

It should however be borne in mind that Shakhevitch's main Druze contacts were the Abu Rukn family, and that 'Isfiya and Daliya, both of which had lost sons at Yanuh, were considered his territory. He was also involved in the pre-battle agreement which, unlike the one in Shafa'amr, went so catastrophically wrong for the IDF. By stressing the 'treachery' of the villagers of Yanuh and Jath, he may have been trying to distance himself from any responsibility for the fiasco. It is interesting to note that Shakhevitch does not mention the battle of Yanuh in his recently published personal memoir.

In spite of the problems at Yanuh, Operation Hiram resulted in Israeli victory. Qawuqji's forces were expelled from the Galilee in three days and approximately half of the estimated 50 000–60 000 Palestinians living there before 29 October fled to Lebanon. Almost all Palestinian Druze remained and no Druze villagers were expelled.

This is despite the fact that the villagers of Yanuh and Jath had not only resisted the IDF but had reneged on their pre-battle pledge not to resist. This unexpected switch of allegiance in mid-battle was one of the main causes of IDF losses and it is very surprising that the IDF did not retaliate by expelling the inhabitants.

The question of the exodus of the Palestinian population from the Galilee in the wake of Operation Hiram is dealt with at some length by the Israeli historian Benny Morris in his ground-breaking book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*. There he claims that during Operation Hiram:

> No clear guidelines were issued to the commanders of the advancing IDF columns about how to treat each religious or ethnic group they encountered. What emerged roughly conformed to a pattern as if such 'instinctive' guidelines had been followed by both the IDF and the different conquered communities . . . . The demographic outcome generally corresponded to the circumstances of the military advance. Roughly, villages which had put up a fight or a stiff fight against IDF units were depopulated: their inhabitants, fearing retribution for their martial ardour, or declining to live under Jewish rule, fled, or in some cases were expelled. The facts of resistance or peaceful surrender, moreover, roughly corresponded to the religious-ethnic character of the villages. In general, wholly or largely Muslim villages tended to put up a fight. Christian villagers tended to surrender without a fight or without assisting Qawuqji's units. In mixed villages where the IDF encountered resistance the Christians by and large stayed put while the Muslims fled or were forced to leave. Druze and Circassian villagers nowhere resisted IDF advance.[38]

The case of Yanuh and Jath mentioned above shows clearly that Morris is simply wrong to claim that no Druze villages resisted IDF advance. But in more general terms the history of the Palestinian Druze during the war makes his hypothesis – that the guidelines about how to treat each religious community were instinctive rather than explicit – difficult to accept. Given that some Christian villagers who did *not* resist IDF occupation were expelled anyway (Morris cites 'Ilabun and al-Rama as two examples)[39] the fact that the Druze villagers of Yanuh and Jath – who *had* resisted – were not expelled (nor

those from any other Druze village, for that matter), would seem to shift the burden of proof to those such as Morris who deny that some kind of explicit, official pro-Druze policy existed, at least on the part of IDF commanders. Indeed, in the case of al-Rama, a Christian village with a small Druze minority, Morris himself cites the fact that during Operation Hiram the Christians were expelled while the Druze were allowed to stay. He cites this as evidence for his wider theory that the expulsions are best characterized by a certain randomness, and does not seem interested in the implications of the fact that the Druze remained.[40]

Perhaps Morris' implied position – that no explicit pro-Druze policy existed – is based on his statement that the 'Druze' villagers of 'Amqa were expelled during Operation Dekel in July 1948. Morris claims that 'Amqa was the only Druze village in western Galilee shelled and evacuated'.[41] However, 'Amqa was not a Druze village, nor had it been a Druze village for over a century: it was cleared of its Druze inhabitants in the mid-nineteenth century and resettled shortly afterwards by Muslims.[42]

Epilogue
The Druze and the State in the Immediate Aftermath of the War, November 1948–July 1949

The success of Operation Hiram marked the end of large-scale fighting in the Galilee. Qawuqji's forces had been pushed out. The IDF not only had total control of the Galilee, but had also swept even further north, capturing a number of villages in southern Lebanon and advancing as far as the Litani river.

Although the battle for the north was effectively over, the war as a whole did not formally draw to a close until the Egyptian forces in the south were finally defeated at the end of the first week in January following the success of Operation Horev, launched in the last week of December. On 7 January 1949 the first Arab–Israeli war formally ended. Armistice discussions began in Rhodes on 13 January, and by 20 July Israel had signed agreements with all the combatants. She was in possession of the whole of Mandatory Palestine with the exception of the Gaza Strip, which was under Egyptian control, and the West Bank of the river Jordan, held by the Jordanians.[1]

The successful completion of Operation Hiram and the consequent end of the shooting war in the north, gave birth to a new era in the relationship between the Druze and the State. It was a time of promise but also of uncertainty. The leaders of the community, who had spearheaded the policy of co-operation with the Jews, found themselves on the winning side and therefore in a favourable position. But they also knew that with the ending of hostilities and the undisputed Israeli victory their usefulness, at least in military terms, had run its course. The atmosphere in the north in the wake of

Operation Hiram was one of great tension and uncertainty for the Palestinian community as a whole. The IDF was intent on 'evacuating' Palestinian villages that lay near the border, ostensibly to secure the borders but also to clear out as many Palestinians as possible in the confusion of the immediate aftermath of war. The Israeli government was all too aware of the size of the Palestinian minority living within the boundaries of the State. The smaller that minority was by the end of the armistice negotiations the better. Even Christian villagers who had not resisted the IDF advance and who had refused to co-operate with Qawuqji's forces, were being expelled during this period. In the face of all this, the Druze cannot have been absolutely sure of their position as 'friends' of the newly born State.[2]

There were powerful voices from the Israeli establishment who spoke out against the expulsions, however, one of the most prominent being Itzhak Ben Tzvi, who had always been particularly close to the Druze. As Morris puts it:

> Israeli leaders such as Shitrit and Ben Tsvi succeeded in halting some evictions and expulsions. Consideration of future Jewish–Druze, Jewish–Circassian and Jewish–Christian relations . . . played a decisive role in mobilizing the various civilian bureaucracies against undifferentiating wholesale expulsions.[3]

These voices, and certain events on the ground, went some distance in reassuring the Druze community that they were indeed being 'taken care of' (to use Yehuda Blum's expression) during this very uncertain period, when the shape of the north was being carved out and the Druze could not be sure of their place in it.

The Druze and the Minority Affairs Ministry

The official attitude of the Minority Affairs Ministry towards the Druze is described in a long report drafted at the end of December 1948 which reviewed the role of the MAM:

> The Druze in the State were not only neutral but supportive of our war effort and fought in our battles against a common enemy. The lion's share of our victories in the Galilee should be attributed to them. They are also a persecuted people looking for freedom

> . . . although they speak Arabic, tension and conflicts [spanning] hundreds of years have placed a significant barrier between them and the Arabs.[4]

Bechor Shalom Shitrit, who was Minister of Minority Affairs (as well as Police Minister), had, like Ben Tzvi, spoken out against the expulsion of Palestinians from the north, and was keen to consolidate the friendship with the Druze. He saw the Druze's potential as a useful ally within the borders of the new state which, it became clear, would include a substantial Muslim population.

Two weeks after the end of Operation Hiram, Shitrit made a ceremonial visit to the Druze villages in the western Galilee. The visit was organized by Gad Makhnes, the Director General of the MAM, both as a gesture of support towards the Druze, and as a useful piece of publicity. The MAM could be fairly sure of a positive response from the Druze villagers who had collaborated with them during the war. This response could be held up both domestically and internationally as an example of the friendly esteem that the recently conquered inhabitants held towards their new rulers.

Shitrit visited the three main Druze villages in the western Galilee – Abu Snan, Yarka and Julis – and was given an appropriately warm and festive reception in each. He went to Abu Snan first, and was taken to the house of the al-Biri family (part of the larger Khayr clan) who, according to Shitrit, were 'the most notable family in the village'. The route to the house was lined with young men 'exclaiming a special welcome message which they had learned by heart in honour of the visit'. Following refreshments, Shitrit was called upon to give a speech to the village:

> I fulfilled their wishes and spoke to them in Arabic indicating our appreciation for the hearty attitude of the Druze sect in general and the people of the village in particular and [I told them] that the State of Israel will treat them as citizens with equal rights. My words were received with great enthusiasm.

There were similar receptions in Julis and Yarka. In Julis, Shitrit was welcomed by Shaykh Salman Tarif (Amin's brother) who made a speech in his honour in which he 'expressed the strength of the closeness between the Druze sect and the people of Israel'. In Yarka,

Shitrit called on both Shaykh Jabr Dahish al-Mu'addi and Shaykh Marzuq al-Mu'addi and enjoyed an equally ebullient welcome.[5]

It is interesting to note that according to the documentary evidence Shitrit was accompanied on his tour by a certain Mr Knox and a certain Mr Burns from the American Legation. They were impressed by the reception that Shitrit received in the Druze villages:

> I must point out that Mr. Knox and Mr. Burns could not believe their eyes and were really astonished and stunned by the warm reception, which they were not expecting. Mr. Knox says that in his entire career fate has never given him such an opportunity to see such a sight and Mr. Burns said if he were to write to America describing what he had seen that they would think he was telling a fantastic story while inebriated.

Shaykh Salman Tarif, on thanking Shitrit for his visit, also thanked Mr Knox:

> and asked to express the gratitude of the Druze sect to the government of the USA for helping Israel realize the idea of returning to Zion . . . [he also said] that America should continue along this road, and thanks to her help, Israel will continue to rise and prosper.

The fact that these two Americans accompanied Shitrit on this visit indicates the Ministry's desire to use the tour as a publicity stunt. The Israeli government was under a certain degree of pressure at this time from the international community to allow the return of Palestinian refugees and to stop the expulsions of the border villages (particularly as some of these border villages were Christian). Demonstrating to official American representatives that at least some of those who had been conquered were happy with their lot, helped to burnish Israel's image in the US.

The report on Shitrit's visit to the north contains an account of the welcoming speech made by Salman Tarif in which he refers to Druze claims of an 'ancestral link' between the Druze and the Jews. This ancestral link derived from the fact that Nabi Shu'ayb – an important figure in Druze mythology, whose shrine in the Galilee is the destination of an annual Druze pilgrimage – was

identified as the Old Testament figure Jethro, the priest of the Medianites. The story goes that Moses married Jethro's daughter Tsipora, thus making the Jews and the Druze 'in-laws'. The following is Shitrit's summary of Tarif's speech:

> After welcoming us he elaborated on the notion of the closeness between the Druze sect and the people of Israel and he especially emphasized that the friendship between the people of the Druze community and the people of Israel is not a new one but an ancient one; not only are the relations ones of friendship but they are also familial relations, because we are after all in-laws. The familial relationship derives from the marriage of Moses to Tzipora the daughter of Jethro, the priest of the Medianites. According to Druze belief and tradition Nabi Shu'ayb is none other than Jethro. He mentioned the story about the daughter of the priest of Median who drew water in order to give it to the flocks of their father, but the herdsman drove them off. It was Moses who saved them and gave water to their goats, and it was as a result of this act that the priest of Median was led to give his daughter Tzipora to Moses. He also said that the familial closeness which began in the earliest days of Israeli history has been strengthened in our day through a closeness of blood in battle by Israel for its country in which the blood of Israel and the blood of the Druze mingled for the liberation of the land.[6]

For Salman Tarif this claim, although historically dubious, served as a useful rhetorical device to bolster the perception of Druze pro-Jewishness in an uncertain and volatile period.

As far as the Israelis were concerned anything that served to emphasize the cultural and religious differences between the Druze and their Muslim and Christian fellow Arabs – and thus nurture Druze particularism – was desirable. In his report Shitrit even goes so far as to throw open for discussion the idea, suggested to him by Ben Gurion, that the Druze in Israel be 'turned into a *millet*';

> [It is] a wonderful idea in which there is much foresight because I too believe that we must encourage amongst the Druze the realization that they are a sect separate from the Muslims and it is towards this that they must strive.[7]

Shitrit's tone, and the whole notion of reviving the *millet* system, reflects the somewhat imperialistic attitude of many Israelis at that time. In this mind-set, the Druze neatly fit into the category of 'friendly native', rather like the Gurkhas in India, whose particularistic nature was to be encouraged in order to help the colonial power better control the unfriendly natives.

During Shitrit's visit to Julis, Shaykh Salman Tarif asked for his help in an ongoing dispute between the Druze and the Muslim Council over the official listing of Nabi Shu'ayb's grave. The Druze, and in particular the Tarif family, wanted the grave listed as belonging to the Druze sect. Ben Tzvi had already helped the Druze side by appointing an attorney to represent their case in the courts but the matter was still unresolved at that time. Shaykh Salman rounded off his long speech of welcome to Shitrit by saying:

> Now that Israel has returned to its land the time has come for the grave of Nabi Shu'ayb and the estate in which it is located to be listed in the name of the Druze sect.

Shitrit promised to convey his request to Ben Gurion.[8]

Shitrit's tour of the villages in the western Galilee was deemed a success by the Ministry, but Moshe Yitah, head of the Haifa branch, was alarmed that Shitrit had not visited 'Isfiya and Daliya. On 24 November, about a week after the visit to Yarka, Julis, and Abu Snan, Yitah sent Shitrit a telegram:

> The notables of Daliya and 'Isfiya stress that you have already visited nearly all the villages except for theirs. I suggest that you come to Haifa . . . in order to enable your visit to Daliya and 'Isfiya please cable your agreement immediately.[9]

The concerted effort made by the Ministry to butter the Druze up and to make sure that the valuable strategic links forged during the war remained strong, had to appear even-handed.

Although as a result of the work of officials such as Yitah and Shitrit the Druze were given a certain degree of special treatment by the Ministry during this period, they had nowhere to turn when their complaints lay with the Ministry itself. After several Druze in 'Isfiya lodged complaints against Shakhevitch concerning the distribution

of supplies, claiming that he was abusing his powers as head of the village council there, no remedy was forthcoming. Indeed, the Ministry refused to get involved at all:

> It is our opinion that complaints against our officials which come as a result of intrigues amongst villagers should not be encouraged. One must make it clear to these people that we [the MAM] shall not serve as a conduit for complaints of this kind and we shall not be drawn into intrigues since this does not contribute in any way to the cause we all serve.

This attitude is typical of that held by Israeli officials towards the Palestinians in general during this period. The Druze were by no means immune to it.[10]

The Druze, the IDF and the police

Druze relations with the IDF at this time were more turbulent. The IDF continued to enjoy the high degree of operational independence it had won during the course of the war, managing things according to their own rules and remaining the immediate authority on the ground. For example, travel permits and permits allowing the possession of arms still had to be obtained from the military governor of the region in question, and the attitude of the army towards the minorities was very important. The army's insistence on confiscating Druze weapons once the war in the north was over, was one cause of tension between the IDF and their former comrades-in-arms. Shim'oni was aware that he had to tread delicately between the two. In a letter to Sasson detailing the progress of the war and the various problems facing the Foreign Ministry, he devoted a paragraph to the confiscation of Druze arms:

> One of the problems that we are facing now after the occupation is the attitude towards the Druze. The army wants to confiscate their private arms claiming that it confiscates arms even from Jews. It is clear that taking arms from the Druze, our friends, may entail complications or troubles. We are trying to find a way to satisfy the requests of the army and not to offend the Druze.[11]

There were also complaints made by Druze still serving in the Unit of the Minorities. On 16 November, two weeks after the successful completion of Operation Hiram (and two weeks after the battle of Yanuh in which more than a dozen Druze serving in the IDF had been killed), a group of Druze from ‘Isfiya sent a long letter of complaint to Ben Gurion. The complaint seems to have centred on a pay dispute. The Druze soldiers, who were at the time receiving fifteen pounds a month and whose families also received an allowance, had apparently been promised a pay rise by Shakhevitch, Yanai and Geura Zayd. But Lishansky, the unit's commander, refused to give it to them, and had allegedly told them something to the effect that if they didn't like it they could simply pack their bags. The group did leave in protest, and were writing the letter to Ben Gurion in his capacity as Minister of Defence, asking him to put the problem right so that they could return:

> We are ready at any time to carry weapons under the banner of the Israeli army and we do not want to leave for no reason so we are hoping to return again to the army after Your Excellency has looked into this matter.[12]

This was yet another instance of confused signals between the army commanders in the field and the policy-makers in Tel Aviv. Geura Zayd and his men were motivated by political considerations and had made promises in their drive to co-opt the Druze, promises that the army were clearly unwilling to fulfil. It is unclear exactly how this dispute was resolved but Ben Gurion's secretary passed the letter along to the MAM, and in December received a reply confirming that Shitrit was ‘dealing with the matter’. The Druze soldiers in question did remain in the army, indicating that some kind of accommodation was reached. In addition, towards the end of April 1949, Tuvia Lishansky organized a military parade to coincide with the Druze day of pilgrimage to the tomb of Nabi Shu‘ayb. The procession was meant to honour those Druze who had fought with the IDF during the war and a contingent of Druze soldiers from the Unit of the Minorities was selected to march by. Representatives from the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the MAM and the police also attended the ceremony. The parade was clearly an attempt to soothe any bad feelings between the Druze and the army.[13]

Their war-time service in the IDF did bring the Druze many advantages, and Druze veterans went to great lengths to obtain certificates stating that they had fought in the IDF against the Arab armies during the war. One such letter was issued to Jad'an 'Amasha, a Druze living in 'Isfiya (although originally from Jabal Druze) who had joined the IDF quite early on, in January 1948. The letter was written by Geura Zayd and bears the official Ministry of Minority Affairs stamp. It states that 'Amasha had showed 'courage and vigour' during his army service and that he was amongst 'the first Druze to collaborate practically, while victory was not yet apparent on the horizon'. Zayd went on to write that the letter is a 'souvenir' for him and 'expresses his complete rights in the State'.[14]

Some effort was also made to ensure that discharged Druze soldiers were given jobs, mainly in the police force, and that Druze who had been policemen during the Mandate were employed in the new Israeli police force. Geura Zayd was closely involved in this effort and was called upon to verify the trustworthiness of various individuals who had applied to serve in the police. He also helped wounded Druze soldiers by ensuring that they received disability pay until they had completely recovered, and by trying to obtain temporary compensation for their families. In these respects Zayd, who had been part of the original recruitment drive amongst the Druze of 'Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal, remained close to the men he had helped recruit after the war was over.[15]

The smuggling of goods and people across borders and the looting of abandoned villages was a major problem for the security forces during this period. The Druze community, like every other, became involved in these activities. At the end of December 1948 Gad Makhnes was forced to write to Shakhevitch that the MAM had received complaints about Druze from Bayt Jann pillaging evacuated villages in the area. Shakhevitch wrote back dismissing the claims, saying he was not prepared to take action because the Druze were only doing what everyone else was:

> All the populated villages are enjoying this state of chaos and it is clear that the Druze are among them, [but] this crime can not be connected only to them.[16]

The documents also suggest that a number of Druze smuggled refugees across international borders for money, returning them – at

least temporarily – to their villages.[17] Druze were also caught with smuggled goods in their houses although in many cases they were treated more leniently by the authorities than Muslims in the same predicament, presumably because they enjoyed a degree of influence with the police force or the military authorities. In March 1949, the police raided a Druze house and uncovered a large cache of smuggled goods, including unlicensed weapons. The Druze homeowner was arrested but quickly released under pledge until trial due to the 'efforts of Mr. Geura Zayd, officers of the Minorities Unit, and some Druze notables, of whom the man is a relative'.[18]

There is some evidence that the Druze were treated preferentially when it came to searches conducted by the IDF in the hunt for Arab infiltrators. H.Z. Hirschberg, the Director of the Muslim and Druze Department in the Ministry for Religious Affairs, wrote to the headquarters of the military authority in the north in the summer of 1949. In his letter he complained about IDF methods in searching Palestinian villages and he singled the Druze out for special attention:

> I must stress that we are especially interested in good relations at least with part of the non-Jewish population – in this case, the Druze – and we must take special care during searches among them.[19]

There were also occasions when the Druze co-operated with the police and the army to capture smugglers. In April 1949 some Druze from Hurfish, a small Druze village close to the Lebanese border, were robbed by Lebanese smugglers. In retaliation between forty and fifty Druze from Hurfish crossed the border and attacked the village of Ramaysh. They wounded many villagers and kidnapped two Lebanese smugglers who were wanted by the Israeli security forces, escorting them back across the border and delivering them to the Israeli police. A report entitled 'Co-operation between the Druze and the police' sets out the results of an inquiry into the incident, and shows concern that weapons 'left with the Druze for the purposes of defence and not for actions connected to the business of smuggling', had been used in the raid across the border. This suggests a continuing ambivalence in the Israelis' attitude towards the Druze: the Druze could indeed be useful but they were not to be trusted. The fact that the army had allowed some of them to keep their weapons was a

point of concern which often crops up in the documents of this period. The cross-border incident also points to another aspect of the Druze's relationship with the State during this uncertain time. The Druze were able to use their special friendship with the Israelis as a weapon in disputes between them and the communities they had lived alongside – both peacefully and belligerently – for hundreds of years. The growing Druze dependence on the State's authority was something the Israelis did not try hard to discourage.[20]

The Druze and the question of land

The issue of land ownership was one of the central points of dispute between the Arabs and the Jews during this period. As stated above, the post-Operation Hiram period in the north was characterized by an atmosphere of fear and suspicion. Villagers were being expelled from their homes and pushed across the border, or forced to set up home in neighbouring villages where they were unwelcome. Palestinian land everywhere was being 'acquired' by neighbouring kibbutzim. A ministerial committee set up in July 1948 to deal with the question of abandoned property was making a visible effort to treat the issue of land distribution fairly. In reality, however, the army retained control on the ground, and land was being parcelled out in a fairly random manner, often with the tacit approval of the government.

The town of Safuriyya, whose capture had been facilitated by the events at Shafa'amr, is a good example of this practice. During Operation Dekel in July 1948 the town had been abandoned; then during the relatively peaceful period following Operation Hiram in November, the town witnessed the return of some of its inhabitants. But the villagers' return was unwelcome to the Israelis not only for overall political reasons, and strategic worries about setting dangerous precedents, but because neighbouring Jewish settlements wanted to appropriate the land surrounding the village. In January the villagers were put on trucks, driven out of the village, and told to make new homes in neighbouring towns and villages. The land surrounding Safuriyya was divided up between three neighbouring kibbutzim in February. This kind of incident naturally created an atmosphere of panic in other Palestinian communities.[21]

The Druze were not immune to arbitrary land seizures. Although relatively peaceful, this period was chaotic, and there was no guarantee

that co-operation with the Jews during the war enabled one to keep one's land in peacetime. Indeed, Christian villages which had co-operated with the IDF during the war were cleared of their inhabitants as part of the mopping up of the border areas in early November. Most of the inhabitants of Bir'im and Iqrit were expelled to the Lebanon, although some were allowed to remain in Israel. In the summer of 1949 the villagers of Khisas and Qatiya were expelled. Families from these villages had co-operated with the Hagana since the days of the 1936–39 Revolt and had helped the Yishuv purchase Arab lands during the Mandate period, but this did not give them any protection. There was some resistance within the political establishment to the expulsions, and a plan which emerged towards the end of 1949 to expel the inhabitants of a series of villages in the north – including the Druze village of Hurfish – as part of the border clearing policy, was dropped after political objections were raised by the Foreign Ministry. The fact that a Druze village was among the possible targets of expulsion does not seem to have been the decisive factor in dropping the plan. Rather, it reflects the bureaucratic ascendancy of those in the political establishment who were opposed to the wholesale clearing of border areas.[22]

In November some land surrounding Shafa'amr was appropriated by neighbouring Jewish settlements and the crops there were being harvested by the settlers. Yitah immediately wrote to Gad Makhnes, the Director General of the Minority Affairs Ministry in Tel Aviv, asking him to take action to stop the harvesting.[23] Makhnes in turn wrote to the office of the infamous Custodian of Abandoned Property in protest. In the letter he cites Druze loyalty during the war as the reason why the decision to confiscate the land should be rescinded:

> We ask you to check who is responsible for this action. The town of Shafa'amr was the first in the region to extend its hands in peace to the IDF. The residents of the village did not abandon their property and a considerable part of the population is Druze who fight shoulder to shoulder with our soldiers. From all that has been said heretofore [it should be understood] that their property should not be regarded as abandoned property. We ask you to take the necessary steps to put right what has been done. Please regard our request as urgent.[24]

The Custodian of Abandoned Property reluctantly undertook to 'take the necessary steps to put the matter right', but his office clearly did not share the Minority Affairs Ministry's view that the Druze were entitled to preferential treatment. There were similar complaints at that time from Druze in Julis that nearby kibbutzim were harvesting Druze lands without paying any compensation. Yona Engel, a Jewish lawyer in Haifa hired by the Druze of Shafa'amr to represent their case, wrote a letter of complaint to the Custodian of Abandoned Property concerning insulting remarks that an employee of his had made to him concerning his employment by Druze clients:

> I must say that at the time of the meeting I had with Mr. Props from your office a transparent hint was made that Jewish lawyers should not be taking care of Druze matters. I find this comment inappropriate and in any case I shall not flinch from protecting any person who has rights under the law.[25]

A later correspondence between Engel and Yitah shows that Yitah supported Engel's stand and admired him for it.

The fact that Engel was criticized for taking on Druze clients reveals the tenuousness of the Druze's position in the new Israeli state. On the one hand, officials such as Yitah, Makhnes and Zayd, were clearly willing to go out of their way to see that Druze co-operation during the war was rewarded. On the other hand many in authority made no distinction between 'Druze' and 'Arabs'. The notion that the Druze deserved to occupy a special protected category had by no means percolated to all levels of state authority in the crucial months following the end of hostilities. Indeed, Druze complaints over confiscation were often simply ignored, despite the efforts of the communities' leaders and of their friends in the government. One such dispute arose over the fact that Druze in Bayt Jann were not allowed access to their lands in the very northern part of the Galilee. The Druze sent letters pleading their case to the Ministry of Agriculture, the IDF and the MAM, but they were told that the lands lay too close to Syrian military posts and that access was absolutely forbidden.[26]

In spite of experiences such as this, the Druze nevertheless enjoyed greater opportunity to seek redress than their Christian and Muslim neighbours. The Druze maintained much more regular and intimate

contact with the Jewish community than other Palestinians did, and in particular they had a direct link to the IDF as a result of their service.

The Druze and their neighbours

During this period of flux the Druze seem to have had mixed relations with other Palestinian Arabs, and particularly with the refugees. Many refugees had fled to Druze villages during the fighting and had been forced to remain there after the hostilities had died down, forbidden to return to their homes. For example, refugees from Birwa lived in Julis for a short time, and there is no documentary evidence of any trouble between the refugees and the villagers.[27]

Relations between refugees and Druze in Daliyat al-Karmal and 'Isfiya were not so harmonious. As early as August 1948 the Abu Rukn family complained to the army about 250 Muslim refugees who had fled to 'Isfiya from the surrounding villages of Tira and Balad al-Shaykh. According to the Abu Rukns the refugees were in contact with the Iraqi forces at that time occupying 'the Triangle', the area around Jenin due south of Nazareth.[28] According to the army memo on this matter the Druze of 'Isfiya, represented by the Abu Rukns, formally requested that the IDF deport the refugees to the Triangle. It is unclear whether or not this request was carried out.

After Operation Hiram refugees from Umm al-Zaynat living in Daliyat al-Karmal lodged a number of complaints against the Druze there. In one letter to Yitah they complained that they were the victims of 'cruel and inhumane treatment' by the Daliya villagers, alleging that several refugees had been attacked by the people there after some animals were stolen by unknown thieves. In the letter they begged to be able to return to their villages, or failing that to be allowed to move into the relative safety of the caves on Mount Carmel. But this picture is complicated by the fact that there were also refugees from 'Ayn Hud (now the Israeli artists' colony Ein Hod) living in Daliya at the time, and no trouble between them and the villagers is reported. In fact on one occasion the villagers of Daliya joined in a petition, sent to Yitah, to secure the release of some of the 'Ayn Hud villagers being detained by the police in Haifa.

Problems with refugees living temporarily in Druze communities clearly had far more to do with very specific circumstances on the

ground than with any general feeling of hostility or goodwill on the part of the Druze. The Druze do not appear to have behaved any differently towards refugees at this time from any other Palestinians still in possession of their land and houses.[29]

The Druze were aware of the hostility that the rest of the settled Palestinian community felt towards them. Fresh in their minds were memories of the reprisal attacks by Muslims that followed Druze cooperation with the Jews in the 1936–39 uprising. This time, of course, the Jews were in control and thus to a large extent the Druze were protected. In addition, the beaten enemy had more important things to worry about in the chaotic aftermath of the war than taking revenge on the Druze. The Druze in the western Galilee who lived in close proximity to Christians and Muslims were keen to live in peace and avoid unnecessary conflict. On Shitrit's aforementioned visit to the north in November 1948, the Druze of Julis took him aside for a 'secret conversation' in which they asked him to prevent the Druze IDF veterans from pillaging and looting 'so as not to spoil the relationship between them and their Christian and Muslim neighbours'. What this conversation does reveal is that some of the Druze who had joined the IDF had been openly flaunting the power that being part of the winning army gave them, behaviour that was bound to cause anger and conflict between the communities.[30]

The Druze not only worried about the attitude that the local population held towards them. Potentially more serious was the fact that their collaboration with the Jews had been noticed by the defeated Arab armies. In February 1949, the Iraqi government condemned to death for treachery two Druze from Daliyat al-Karmal. The death sentence was issued from the Triangle. The issuance of these death sentences caused panic in Daliya and rioting broke out. During the riots many of the refugees from Umm al-Zaynat were attacked and the IDF had to be called in to protect the refugees. In the end nothing came of the death sentences but they do indicate the level of distrust between the Druze and their Muslim neighbours – both in Palestine and abroad – that prevailed during this period.[31]

Another example of this atmosphere of tension and suspicion concerns Druze from the village of Sajur. Several villagers from Sajur had travelled to the Jabal during the war to visit relatives, and in the late summer of 1949 they were arrested by the Syrian authorities

and accused of treason. The Mukhtar of Sajur wrote to the Israeli government to ask for their help in trying to free the captured Druze. He was also supported in his petition by the Chief Rabbi of Safad because the Druze in question had helped the Rabbinate there gain access to Jewish holy places in Sajur. In a letter to the military headquarters of the northern front, the Mukhtar states: 'I ask you to do your best and appeal to the Syrian government to release them immediately since they are jailed as Israeli citizens.' The outcome of this case is not documented.[32]

When the last armistice agreement was signed between Israel and Syria on 20 July 1949 the Druze community stood poised to play a part in the construction of the new State. No Druze had been expelled from their homes, and most – although not all – Druze land remained in the hands of its rightful owners. The Druze had a foothold in the army and in the police force, possessed influential friends in government, and could, without too much effort, contain the tension between them and their neighbours. Hebrew was already being taught in Druze villages. As Arabs, they had certainly fared better than any other community, and by August 1949, under the leadership of the Tarif family, they had begun to negotiate their communal status with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in an effort to distinguish them officially from their Christian and Muslim neighbours. As Israelis they would thus be treated better by the State than any other Israeli Arabs, but they nevertheless remained second-class citizens in a Jewish state.

From the Israeli perspective their usefulness was clear. In a report sent to the Minister of Religious Affairs and copied to Shim'oni, Tuvia Cohen (the Ministry of Religious Affairs liaison officer responsible for Muslims and Druze) assessed the position of the Druze as a separate community in the new state. Cohen reiterates the usefulness of the Palestinian Druze as part of the larger Druze community in Syria and Lebanon:

> After a series of visits and meetings that I had with the notables of the Druze community in Israel, as a liaison, I find it appropriate to draw the attention of the highest authorities in the government to the fact that the question of taking care of the Druze community has a vital importance politically and the state could benefit a great deal if it considers its actions.

The fact that the Israelis had allowed Druze from Syria and Lebanon to make the pilgrimage to the tomb of Nabi Shu'ayb that April was described by Cohen as having 'unintentionally become an effective propaganda move in the whole of the Middle East'. Indeed, Cohen saw access to the tomb as 'a means to prove the attitude [of the State of Israel] towards the whole Druze community'. Cohen counsels a policy of Israeli–Druze co-operation, stating that the Druze community 'should be provided with what it deserves according to its special needs so that the State can reap the desired benefits'.[33]

Conclusion

By the summer of 1949, in the aftermath of the war, the Palestinians faced a crisis. Many Muslims and a significant number of Christians had lost their homes and their land and had sought refuge in neighbouring Arab states. In contrast, the Palestinian Druze, having allied themselves with the Jewish side, retained possession of their homes and most of their land and some were even serving in the Israel Defence Forces.

What, then, were the stages in the evolution of the alliance between the Druze and the Jews? The importance of the links formed between the Druze and the Jews during the British Mandate in Palestine cannot be overestimated, for these links served to set the scene for the wartime alliance to come. Two major events contributed to the growth of the Druze–Jewish relationship during this period. The first was the relative lack of Druze involvement in the Arab Revolt of 1936–39. The violence perpetrated by both Palestinians and Jews during the revolt caused deep and lasting hostility between the two sides. From the Jewish perspective, the fact that most Palestinian Druze remained neutral was significant and a sign of possible friendship. From the perspective of many Druze, the fact that their neutrality resulted in reprisal attacks by Muslim gangs created irrevocable suspicion of the nationalist leadership; the two Druze who were most active in pursuing links with the Zionists during the 1947–49 war, Labib Abu Rukn and Salih Khanayfis, had each lost relatives in these reprisal attacks.

The second important event of the Mandatory period was the discussion arising from plans to transfer the entire Palestinian Druze

community to Jabal Druze in Syria. The negotiations over transfer brought the much larger Druze community of the Jabal squarely into the picture. For the Jews, the advantages of creating contacts with the Druze in Syria were obvious. The leader of the Syrian Druze, Sultan al-Atrash, had been a major Arab nationalist figure in the Levant since his near-victorious revolt against the French in the 1920s. Good relations with him would serve Zionist interests in the region well. As far as the Palestinian Druze were concerned, their own value as middlemen between the two much larger and more powerful communities – the Jews of Palestine and the Druze on the Jabal – made them less dispensable as Zionist allies. The transfer plan also triggered much Jewish research on the Druze and on their history in the Middle East. And the very logistics of trying to set up and implement the plan solidified the tentative links then beginning to be forged between individual Druze and Jews. However the whole question of links with Sultan al-Atrash should be approached with caution. Sultan al-Atrash was not as preoccupied with the Jews as they were with him. His attention was directed towards Damascus, not Jerusalem, and focused on the role the Druze would play in the emerging Syrian nation. Attempts to present him as seriously considering an alliance with the Jews derive from the Palestinian Druze need for a carrot to entice their Israeli counterparts.

When hostilities between Arabs and Jews broke out following the UN endorsement of the Partition Plan in November 1947, those Jews and Druze who had established contact during the 1936–39 Revolt were keen to institutionalize those contacts. This time the stakes were higher. The impending British withdrawal from Palestine meant that the two sides were fighting to determine the future shape of the region. As the civil war progressed, the Arab states began proclaiming their intention to invade Palestine after the British withdrew and to 'push the Jews into the sea'. In spite of the contacts made with the Zionists during the Mandate, there remained many Druze who believed that Arab victory was inevitable. This belief was reinforced by the arrival in Palestine in January 1948 of the Arab Liberation Army, including a Druze battalion from Syria. The April defeat of this Druze battalion by Jewish forces at the battle of Ramat Yohanan was significant in several respects. For those Druze who had supported the aims of the battalion it was a crushing blow which underscored the fighting potential of the Jewish forces. Placed

in the context of other Arab defeats in the same month, Ramat Yohanan seemed to point to a Jewish victory. For those Druze who had supported the Jewish side from the beginning, the defeat at Ramat Yohanan was a relief and a vindication of their position. For the Jews, although they had won at Ramat Yohanan, the battle's fierceness confirmed the military importance of Druze neutrality, in particular the strategic importance of keeping the Syrian Druze on the Jabal and out of the Galilee. The friendly overtures made by the officers of the Druze battalion after their defeat were also encouraging signs for the future of the alliance.

The inter-state war began with the invasion of the Arab Armies on 15 May 1948, following the British withdrawal the previous day. The ensuing solidification of the Druze–Jewish alliance was spurred by several events. The first was the establishment of a Druze Unit in the Israel Defence Force. This had important consequences for the development of the alliance. It showed the Jews how seriously some Druze wanted to participate in the Jewish war effort, for it was an irrevocable act which committed them to the Jewish side and therefore made their eagerness for a Jewish victory all the stronger. The faked battle for Shafa'amr in July 1948 also marked a new stage in the growing alliance. From the Israeli perspective it was the first time when the tactical, as opposed to strategic, benefits of the alliance with the Palestinian Druze were made so starkly apparent. The victory at Shafa'amr succeeded in silencing those in the Israeli political establishment who remained sceptical about spending time and money on the Druze. It was the example of Shafa'amr that spurred Foreign Ministry officials to approach the Druze in the western Galilee in the late summer of 1948 in order to secure their support. As a result of these efforts the majority of Druze leaders in Palestine came under the umbrella of the alliance.

The battle of Yanuh in late October 1948 was the last major military event of the Druze–Jewish alliance. In one sense Yanuh marked a break in the chain because some Druze villagers from Yanuh and Jath joined in the ALA counterattack against the mainly Druze IDF unit. But in another sense the very fact that the behaviour of the Druze villagers of Yanuh and Jath was seen as a 'betrayal' by the Israelis involved in Druze affairs, indicates the degree to which the Jews had by then come to perceive the Druze as being on their side. Indeed, from a historical perspective, the fact that the 'treacherous'

villagers of Yanuh and Jath were allowed to remain in their homes, while at the same time Muslims and Christians from other villages that had stayed neutral were being expelled, demonstrates the degree of momentum the Druze–Jewish alliance had already gained.

What, then, were the main motives of the Druze and the Jews in forming their wartime partnership? For the Jews the benefits seem clear. After all, the Jews had little to lose by making as many friends as they could. In spite of the fact that the more sober members of the Zionist political establishment tried to rein in the enthusiasm of the intelligence agents handling contacts with the Druze, and in spite of the fact that a few Cassandra-like officials were suspicious of Druze motivations, the policy of pursuing friendly relations with the Druze fitted into a wider Israeli policy, whose most prominent exponent was Ben Gurion himself, of cultivating links with religious minorities throughout the Middle East. In this context the Palestinian Druze were viewed as a stepping stone to a possible alliance with their more powerful cousins in Syria. There was also a sense in which the Palestinian Druze took on the role – given the imperialistic mind-set of many Israeli officials at the time – of friendly natives whose loyalty and affection were to be nurtured because Druze knowledge of the less friendly natives might prove useful to the new state.

The Druze attitude towards the Jews is in some ways more complex and more difficult to analyse. First of all, the Druze did not make a coherent and all-encompassing decision to support the Jewish side at the beginning of the war. This would be an oversimplification. It would be more accurate to say, instead, that there existed politically active pro-Jewish families within the Palestinian Druze community who had maintained contact with the Yishuv since the days of the Mandate, and that the advantages the pro-Jewish activities of these individuals brought to the Druze community as a whole during a time of great hardship and fear created a groundswell of support for the alliance. These advantages set them apart from other Palestinian Arabs and were mainly economic in nature, and as such were obvious to ordinary Druze. For example, the Druze were given special travel permits to bring supplies into their villages, and the families of those Druze who joined the IDF were given free medical care. Even more importantly, the Druze were given permission by the military authorities to harvest their crops. Most important of all, of course,

was the fact that the Druze community remained in possession of most of their land and homes in the wake of the fighting.

The attitude of the Druze towards their Palestinian neighbours is also important when considering their pro-Jewish position. Druze particularism – encouraged by those Zionists involved in the Druze question – and the isolated, rural nature of the Druze community in Palestine meant that most Palestinian Druze felt no affiliation with the urban Muslim and Christian elites, and consequently remained uninvolved in the Palestinian nationalist movement. Instances when the Druze did come into contact with Palestinian nationalism had been largely negative, as with the reprisal attacks on Druze villages during the 1936–39 revolt. Most Palestinian Druze did not see the war in nationalistic terms, as a conflict between Palestinianism and Zionism. Instead, they saw two possibilities: living as a minority in a Jewish state, or living as a minority in a Muslim state. Because of their feelings of alienation from the Palestinian national cause, most Druze were in a position to remain neutral as long as was feasible and then to go with the side that looked like winning. The Druze were in a position to wait *because* they were marginal players. They did not have a coherent leadership which was forced to make a public stand which it then had to fulfil, which rhetoricized itself into action of one kind or another.

There is an interesting historiographical twist to the Druze–Jewish relationship which should be mentioned. There has been a tendency by some Druze and Jewish political figures during the Mandate and the war, and by many Israeli scholars ever since, to view their pre-twentieth-century history through the distorting prism of their modern alliance. Both sides have often claimed that their alliance was inevitable, or somehow predetermined by an age-old friendship between Jews and Druze. That such a friendship has always existed is based mainly on scripture: the Old Testament figure of Jethro, priest of the Medianites and father-in-law of Moses, is taken to be the same as the Qur'anic prophet Shu'ayb, whose tomb in Hittin in the Galilee is a place of Druze pilgrimage. Quite apart from the fact that the identification of Shu'ayb with Jethro is open to question, Judaism and Islam share so many prophets that any Muslim could claim at least as common a heritage with the Jews as the Druze do. Indeed, in his famous speech to the Knesset in October 1977, President Anwar Sadat of Egypt stressed the common Abrahamic parentage of Jews

and Arab Muslims. The fact remains that all these resorts to scripture were merely rhetorical devices that gave entirely immediate and local political and military decisions a spurious sense of depth and context.

Equally odd are the efforts by some scholars and politicians to portray the Druze–Jewish partnership as natural not because the Druze and Jews are in-laws, but because their historical experiences as persecuted minorities are so similar. Used to support this assertion is the theological concept of *taqiya*, which has already been discussed in the Introduction. One of the ways in which *taqiya* has been used is as a convenient device to explain that despite appearances, the Druze are only pretending to fit into the Arab–Muslim culture that surrounds them. The Druze were even compared with the Marranos, the fifteenth-century Spanish Jews forced to profess outward allegiance to Christianity. The result of this assertion is that the Druze, separated in Israeli eyes from the general Arab–Muslim enemy, become more palatable and trustworthy as Jewish allies. Thus isolated, the Druze as allies do not undercut the traditionalists' bipolar picture of the Arab–Israeli conflict, a conflict between a small Jewish state and an undivided Arab entity. The creation by Jews and Druze of a shared history is both an ingredient in, and a result of, their alliance during the 1947–49 Arab–Israeli war.

Paradoxically, if there is any general characteristic of Druze political behaviour, it is the absence of ageless, overriding and determining factors. Rather, the Druze have responded as a particularistic minority to the political circumstances of their time, a fact which brings us back to the main point made in the Introduction. According to their strength or weakness in a given situation, the Druze have either worked with or confronted the ruling power. This was as true in the middle of the thirteenth century as it was in the middle of the twentieth. The Palestinian Druze were in a weak position in the 1947–49 Arab–Israeli war and so they allied themselves to the side that looked most likely to emerge as the new rulers of the region. In short, the key to their political behaviour lay not in *taqiya* or in any other religious tenet, but in pragmatic political calculations.

Notes

Introduction: Some Background on the Druze

1 For a brief discussion of the problems involved in obtaining exact numbers on the Druze population, see Kais Firro, *A History of the Druzes* (Leiden: 1992), p. 3.

2 For a detailed survey of the origins and early history of the Druze, see Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, pp. 3–28, and 'Abbas Abu Salih, *Tarikh al-Muwahhidin al-Duruz al-Siyasi fi 'l-Mashriq al-'Arabi* [*The Political History of the Druze Unitarians in the Arab East*] (Beirut: 1981), pp. 9–57. For a review of the more fantastical theories about the Druze, including one in which their origins are said to lie in a crusading regiment (led by a nobleman entitled 'le Comte de Dreux') which deserted and settled in the hills of Lebanon, see Philip Hitti, *Origins of the Druze People* (New York: 1966), pp. 15–17. Hitti has been criticized by modern Druze scholars for his outmoded views on the racial origins of the Druze. For a useful summary of the Fatimid background to Druzism, see Nejla M. Abu–Izzeddin, *The Druzes: a New Study of Their History, Faith and Society* (Leiden: 1984), pp. 29–74, and Shakib Saleh, *Toldot Hadruzim* [*History of the Druzes*] (Tel Aviv: 1989), pp. 19–38. For studies on al-Hakim see: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, Vol. 3 (Leiden: 1965), 'Al-Hakim Bi-Amr Allah', pp. 76–82; and P.J. Vatikiotis, 'Al-Hakim bi Amrillah: the God-King Idea Realised', *Islamic Culture*, 29/1, 1955. For a more reverent view of al-Hakim's life (occasionally verging on hagiography) see Abu-Izzeddin, *The Druzes*, pp. 75–86, and Sami Nasib Makarem, *The Druze Faith* (Delmar, NY: 1974), pp. 14–18.

3 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 11.

4 Abu-Izzeddin cites recently discovered manuscripts which indicate that al-Hakim went to Sijistan in Persia, where he was later joined by Hamza and whence he continued to send forth mystic meditations (Abu-Izzeddin, *The Druzes*, p. 105). A more mundane theory is that al-Hakim was assassinated by agents of his sister Sitt Mulk who believed he was a threat to the integrity of the caliphate (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, 'Al-Hakim bi Amr Allah', p. 80, and Vatikiotis, The God-King Idea Realised', pp. 3–4).

5 As Firro points out: 'Neither the historical personalities of Hakim and the unitarian *da'i*s [proselytizers] nor the history of the Fatimi caliphate as such have any importance for the Druze. Since the time of the Druze *da'wa* in the eleventh century, the Druze have reconstructed the history of mankind in accordance with their beliefs: Hakim as well as the unitarian *da'i*s are no longer historical figures – they are what the Druze Epistles teach. Thus history has become ahistoric and the ahistoric history'; Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 15.

6 Although the Canon is officially for Druze eyes only, there are translations of parts of it in several secondary sources, namely, Silvestre de Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes* (Paris: 1964); Makarem, *The Druze Faith*; and Hitti, *The Origins of the Druze People*. The Druze belief that there have been no converts to Druzism since 1042 is of dubious validity. Relatively late converts from Islam to Druzism include the Junbalats, the celebrated Lebanese Druze family, who are said to be of Kurdish origin.

7 The author of many Druze epistles and treatises, he is described by Abu-Izzeddin as 'the most deeply revered individual in Druze history after [those who] founded and propagated the faith'; Abu-Izzeddin, *The Druze*, p. 176. For a more detailed account of the Tanukhi family both before their conversion to Druzism and after, see Abu-Izzeddin, pp. 142–72. Firro casts some doubt on the actual historical connections between the Tanukhi family and the Buhturi family; 'Is the kinship relationship between Buhturs and Tanukhs a fiction of the Druze chroniclers?' (*A History of the Druzes*, p. 26). It is interesting to note that Jamal al-Din 'Abdallah al-Tanukhi was also revered as an arbiter of disputes by the non-Druze population. Abu-Izzeddin claims that 'Dhimmis, Christians and Jews, came to him for the settlement of temporal disputes; they went away satisfied with his judgement and praising his justice' (*The Druze*, p. 175).

8 Benjamin Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages* (London: 1983), p. 79.

9 See, for example, Eliahu Epstein, 'The Druze People: Druze Community in Palestine: Traditional Friendship to the Jews', *Palestine and Near East Economic Magazine*, 29, 1939, p. 167. See also Robert Betts, *The Druze* (New Haven: 1988), p. 20, and Gabriel Ben Dor, *The Druzes in Israel: Political Innovation and Integration in a Middle East Minority* (Jerusalem: 1979), p. 90.

10 Kamal Salibi, *The House of Many Mansions: the History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (London: 1985), pp. 121–2. Hitti does mention a savage Mamluke attack on the Druze community of Kisrawan in 1305 (*Origins of the Druze People*, p. 3) but Abu-Izzeddin convincingly refutes this, saying that the Mamlukes were in fact attacking Shi'ite Batinid Kisrawanis (hence the confusion with the Druze). In fact she maintains that there were no Druze living in Kisrawan at that time (*The Druze*, pp. 159–60).

11 Makarem, *The Druze Faith,* p. 2.

12 Abu Salih, *Tarikh al-Muwahhidin al-Duruz*, p. 99.

13 Ben Dor, *The Druzes in Israel*, p. 45.

14 Salibi, *The House of Many Mansions*, p. 122.

15 Hitti, *Origins of the Druze People,* p. 6.

16 Abu-Izzeddin, *The Druzes*, p. 179.

17 Salibi, *House of Many Mansions,* p. 124. According to Salibi, the first historian to mention Ottoman support for the Ma'nids was Haydar al-Shihabi (d. 1835) in the volume entitled 'Al-ghurar al-hisan fi tarikh hawadith al-zaman' of his work *Tarikh al-Amir Haydar Ahmad al-Shihabi* (Cairo: 1900). Salibi also mentions Haydar al-Shihabi in his article 'The secret of the house of Ma'n', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3/4, 1973,

pp. 272–3. For a critique of Salibi's revisionist position on the Ma'nids see Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 28.

18 For an account of Ma'nid history between 1516 and the rule of Fakhr al-Din, see Salibi, 'The secret of the house of Ma'n', pp. 272–8.

19 Nura S. Alamuddin and Paul D. Starr, *Crucial Bonds* (New York: 1980), p. 19.

20 Salibi, *The House of Many Mansions,* p. 127. Salibi claims that Fakhr al-Din was given the Governorship of Sidon in 1590 only on condition that he help his Ottoman patrons keep an eye on the Shi'ites living in Ba'albak and Jabal Amil. Ottoman officials apparently feared the emergence of a pro-Safavid fifth column amongst the Shi'ites of the region.

21 For an account of Fakhr al-Din's period of exile in Tuscany, see Abu-Izzeddin, *The Druzes*, pp. 187–90. This period is interesting because some scholars claim that during his stay in Tuscany he discussed becoming a European agent ready to help in a crusade to conquer 'The Holy Land' from the Turks. Abu-Izzeddin dismisses these claims.

22 For more on Druze settlement in Palestine under the Ma'nids, see Salman Falah, 'A history of the Druze settlements in Palestine during the Ottoman period' in Moshe Ma'oz (ed.), *Studies on Palestine during the Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem: 1975), pp. 31–49.

23 For more on Druze migration to the Hawran, see Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, pp. 31–53. Today the province of Hawran in Syria does not officially include Jabal Druze. However the historical term 'Hawran' includes this area.

24 See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, Vol. 2 (Leiden: 1965), 'Duruz', p. 635.

25 The result was that they became 'more concerned with gaining power within government rather than outside it'; M.E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East, 1792–1923* (London: 1987), p. 134.

26 For more on the Druze revolt against the Egyptians, see Firro, *A History of the Druzes,* pp. 66–78.

27 Given the involvement of the British in driving the Egyptian forces out of Syria and Lebanon in 1840, 'the British government found itself more involved than ever in Lebanese affairs and sought to create some foundation for its policy in that country. Failing to replace France in the latter's special relationship with the Maronites, the British government established a connection with their rivals, the Druze'; Shakib Saleh, 'The British–Druze connection and the Druze rising of 1896 in the Hawran', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 13/2, 1977, pp. 251–60.

28 This dispatch is cited by Joseph Abu Nohra in his article, 'L'évolution du système politique libanais dans le contexte des conflits régionaux et locaux (1840–1864)', in Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar Mills (eds), *Lebanon: a History of Conflict and Consensus* (London, 1988), p. 38.

29 This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 1.

30 'The new political division widened the line of religious cleavage and aggravated rather than assuaged the tensity of the situation'; Philip Hitti, *Lebanon in History* (London: 1957), p. 436. For a vivid eyewitness account

of the events of 1845, see C.H.S. Churchill, *The Druzes and the Maronites under Turkish Rule from 1840 to 1860* (New York: 1973), pp. 91–2.

31 Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, p. 437.

32 'Eager to undermine the autonomy of Mount Lebanon, the Ottomans supported the Druze in an effort to discredit the Shihabi Emirate'; Samir Khalaf, *Lebanon's Predicament* (New York, 1987), p. 58.

33 Churchill, *The Druzes and the Maronites under Turkish Rule from 1840 to 1860*, p. 53.

34 Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, p. 439.

35 The French army did engage in limited skirmishes with the Druze; see Churchill, *The Druzes and the Maronites under Turkish Rule from 1840 to 1860*, pp. 246–8.

36 Churchill, *The Druzes and the Maronites under Turkish Rule from 1840 to 1860*, pp. 260–72. Churchill describes Sa'id Bey Junbalat as an 'audaciously styled English subject' (p. 203).

37 Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, p. 440.

38 'Some among them [i.e. the Christians] had provoked the Druzes and were unquestionably the aggressors at the onset of the civil war, a fact that was obscured by the overwhelming defeat of the Christians in all the warring districts and the emotions this defeat aroused in Syria and beyond; Leila Fawaz, 'Zahle and Dayr al-Qamr, two market towns of Mount Lebanon during the civil war of 1860', in *Lebanon: a History of Conflict and Consensus*, p. 49.

39 See, for example, Churchill, *The Druzes and the Maronites under Turkish Rule from 1840 to 1860*, p. 29.

40 See Y. Porath, 'The peasant revolt of 1858 in Kisrawan', *African and Asian Studies*, 2, 1966, p. 157.

41 See Paul Saba, 'The creation of the Lebanese economy: economic growth in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', Roger Owen (ed.), in *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon* (London: 1976), p. 10.

42 For more on the reforms, see the article by Engin Deniz Akarli, 'The Administrative Council of Mount Lebanon', in *Lebanon: a History of Conflict and Consensus*, passim; see also Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, pp. 442–51.

43 See N. Bouron, *Les Druzes: Histoire du Liban et de la Montagne Haouranaise* (Paris: 1930), pp. 212–19.

44 Saleh, 'The British–Druze Connection and the Druze Rising of 1896 in the Hawran', p. 253.

45 This period also saw divisions within the al-Atrash family. According to Bouron, Ibrahim al-Atrash led the 'pro-Ottoman camp' while his brother Shibli (according to Bouron, known by his followers as 'l'ami des laboureurs') championed the anti-Ottoman camp (*Les Druzes*, p. 214). Saleh claims that Shibli al-Atrash began corresponding with the French Consulate in Damascus during this period, due to the fact that 'the British were no longer helping the Druze as in the past' ('The British–Druze Connection and the Druze rising of 1896 in the Hawran', p. 253).

46 Bouron, *Les Druzes*, p. 215.

47 Saleh, 'The British–Druze connection and the Druze rising of 1896 in the Hawran', p. 256.
48 'In 1896, when the Druze were more desperately in need of help than they had ever been before no one came to their aid'; ibid., p. 257.
49 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, pp. 239–44.
50 Ibid., p. 245.
51 Ibid., p. 249. Salim al-Atrash led the pro-Turk faction while Sultan al-Atrash was pro-Nationalist. Firro maintains that the political aspects of this rivalry were superficial, and that it was 'primarily an internal dispute' (*A History of the Druzes*, p. 250). Abu Salih, on the other hand, claims that all Druze 'both in the Hawran and in Lebanon showed clear enthusiasm for the Arab Revolt' (*Tarikh al-Muwahhidin al-Duruz*, p. 278).
52 See Betts, *The Druze,* p. 36. Druze religious practices will be discussed later in this section.
53 Other politico-religious movements in Islamic history have identified themselves with *tawhid*. The Mu'tazilites, for example, called themselves *ahl al-'adl wa 'l-tawhid* ('The Partisans of Justice and Unity'). Another schismatic group called al-Muwahhidun (the Almohads) ruled briefly in the western part of the Islamic Empire.
54 The reason the Druze have the name *al-duruz* is still debated amongst scholars. One theory is that they took their name from one of the founders of Druzism, Muhammad ibn Isma'il *al-Darazi*, although the plausibility of this theory suffers from the fact that al-Darazi later committed apostasy, and it is hard to imagine why the Druze would have named themselves after a heretic. For more on the origins of the word *al-duruz* see Betts, *The Druze*, pp. 25–8.
55 For a detailed account of the contents of the *Rasa'il* and their bearing on Druze doctrine, see Abu-Izzeddin, *The Druzes*, pp. 101–21. Abu-Izzeddin has translated large sections of the *Rasa'il* in this chapter.
56 Layish points out that although many Druze (particularly in Israel) celebrate *'id al-fitr* it holds no religious or Islamic significance for them, but rather is treated as a holiday; Layish, 'Taqiyya among the Druzes', p. 273.
57 Betts, *The Druze*, p. 20.
58 Ibid., p. 60.
59 It should be said that these claims are not exclusive to Israeli sociologists and historians. More often than not they are following the lead of most Orientalist scholarship, which has tended to explain the political behaviour of Muslims as springing from Islamic theological tenets.
60 Blanc, 'Druze particularism', p. 317.
61 Layish, 'Taqiyya among the Druzes', p. 275.
62 Firro, 'The Druze in and between Syria, Lebanon, and Israel', p. 18.
63 Ibid. Firro points out that the frequently quoted sentence which indicates that the Druze practice *taqiya* by simply following the dominant religion of their environment ('Our Lord has commanded us to hide in the dominant religion, be it what it may; with Christians Christian; with Muslims, Muslim, and so on') is taken from a *Christian* account of Druze religious practice and is probably spurious. The source is entitled *Ta'lim*

al-diyana al-durziyya ('Principles of the Druze Faith') (unpublished manuscript). See Laila Parsons, 'The Druze, the Jews and the Creation of a Shared History', in Ron Nettler and Suha Taji Farouki (eds), *Muslim–Jewish Relations: Intellectual Traditions and Modern Politics* (London: 1998), pp. 131–48.

1 The Druze and the Jews in Mandatory Palestine, 1917–1947

1 A selection of the secondary material I have consulted for this chapter includes: Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, pp. 314–49; David Koren, *Kesher Ne'eman* [*Steadfast Alliance*] (Tel Aviv: 1991), pp. 19–50; Saleh, *Toldot Hadruzim*, pp. 196–211; Ian Black, *Zionism and the Arabs* (Ph.D. thesis, LSE, 1979), pp. 338–64; Yoav Gelber, 'Reshita shel habrit hayehudit hadruzit (1930–1948)' ['The Beginning of the Jewish–Druze Alliance (1930–1948)'], *Catedra*, 60, 1991, pp. 141–81; Yoav Gelber, 'Antecedents of the Jewish–Druze alliance in Palestine', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 28/2, 1992, pp. 352–73; Shakib Saleh, 'Relations between the Jews and the Druze between the two World Wars', in Pinhas Artzi (ed.), *Studies in History: Confrontation and Coexistence* (Ramat Gan: 1984), pp. 165–92. I have also drawn on primary material, although much more heavily in the second half of the chapter which deals with the period between 1939 and 1947. My primary sources are drawn mainly from the Central Zionist Archive [henceforth CZA], the Hagana Archive [henceforth HA] and the Abba Hushi Archive [henceforth AHA].

2 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 314. Certain Lebanese Druze living in Haifa were however active in Muslim and Christian intellectual circles and in an albeit limited way these individuals provided a link for some Palestinian Druze to nationalist politics.

3 This, according to Firro, was 'an act that lent wider respect to the family's spiritual authority'; Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 315.

4 Ibid., pp. 314–15; Ben-Dor, *The Druze in Israel*, pp. 105–6.

5 Koren, *Kesher Ne'eman*, p. 25.

6 'There is no doubt that the joy over the issuing of the Balfour Declaration brought about a complete change in the conduct of the Jews in Palestine, and in their self-respect and pride. The Jews, who had previously considered themselves to be second-class citizens lacking almost any representation in local administration began to see themselves as equals and perhaps even as future masters of the country.' Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestine-Arab National Movement, Vol. ii, 1929–1939: From Riots to Rebellion* (London: 1986), p. 36.

7 Most of this information is taken from Bernard Wasserstein, *The Mandatory Government and the Arab–Jewish Conflict, 1917–1929* (Oxford: 1991), pp. 140–41.

8 Gelber, 'Antecedents of the Druze–Jewish alliance', p. 352. The Druze revolt against the French arose despite the fact that an early agreement

had been made between the newly installed French Mandatory authorities and the Druze over Druze autonomy. The agreement soon unravelled and tension between the French and the Druze in the early 1920s culminated in armed rebellion in 1925–27. The revolt was led by Sultan al-Atrash who, after his eventual defeat by French troops, was sent into exile along with many of his supporters. Much work had been done on the Druze revolt. See Firro, *A History of the Druzes,* pp. 247–305; David MacDowell, *The Druze Revolt 1925–1927 and its Background in the Late Ottoman Period* (MA thesis, Oxford, 1972); Abu Salih, *Tarikh al-Muwahhidin al-Duruz*, pp. 311–59; and Saleh, *Toldot Hadruzim*, pp. 163–77.

9 'The Druze demand for independent representation was the expression of an independent position *vis-à-vis* al-Majlis al-Islami al-A'la [The Higher Muslim Council] as a politico-religious organization; Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 317.

10 Ibid., p. 323. Hani Abu Muslih, one of the Lebanese Druze living in Haifa, was active in the propaganda campaign against the Zionists and was said to have issued anti-Zionist propaganda from the mosque in Haifa.

11 Ben Tzvi's academic interest in the Druze continued throughout his life. In 1954 he wrote an article for the *Israel Exploration Journal* in which he discussed and analysed the Druze. He was a strong believer in the idea, presented by many Zionists, that the Druze were the Jews of the Middle East: 'The Druze are indeed a nation of peculiar character and fate. In a way, in several traits they resemble the Jews. . . . without a state, without self-government, the Druzes have preserved their individuality, religion and customs for nine hundred years'; *Israel Exploration Journal*, 4/2, 1954 (taken from Ben Tzvi's private papers, A116/208, CZA).

12 No relation of the better known Aharon Cohen (who later became director of the Arab Department of Mapam), and author of *Israel and the Arab World* (London: 1970).

13 August 1930, S25/6638, CZA.

14 August 1930, S25/6638, CZA. There is an English summary of the report also written by Ben Tzvi himself – it has the initials 'B.S.' at the bottom – although it is written in the third person. In this report he says 'This is a very secluded community, but it might be helpful, particularly as their brethren in the Hauran, under the rule of the al-Atrash will be the first to attack Rutenberg's station in case of attack.' Rutenberg's station refers to the Palestine Electric Corporation founded in Naharayim in 1932 under the directorship of Pinhas Rutenberg. There is no date on any of the reports but they discuss the visit made in early August.

15 Saleh, 'Relations between the Druze and the Jews between the two World Wars', p. 169.

16 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 325; Saleh, 'Relations between the Druze and the Jews between the two World Wars', p. 169; and Gelber, 'Antecedents of the Druze–Jewish alliance', p. 352. For description of Kisch, see Wasserstein, *The Mandatory Government and the Arab–Jewish Conflict, 1917–1929*, p. 142.

17 Salman Tarif to Ben Tzvi, 6 December 1930, S25/6638, CZA.

18 Ben Tzvi to Salman Tarif, 18 and 22 November 1930, S25/6638, CZA.

19 Saleh, 'Relations between the Druze and the Jews between the two World Wars', p. 170.
20 The Hebrew word here is *machur*. This could also have the more idiomatic meaning of 'sold out to'. It does not necessarily mean that he was actually being paid by the Muslims.
21 'Conversation with 'Abdallah Khayr in the Salon of the Majestic on 12.3.32' and 'Conversation with Shaykh 'Abdallah Khayr in the house of Mr Itzhak Ben Tzvi on 14.4.32', 17 April 1932, S25/6638, CZA. In the second meeting which took place in Ben Tzvi's house, Khayr reiterated that Salman Tarif could not 'be trusted'. Ben Tzvi and Cohen obviously did not abandon Salman Tarif completely because of this information; when the head of the Druze community in Lebanon died they sent a telegram of condolence to Salman Tarif, to which there is a return letter of thanks in Arabic: undated, S25/6638, CZA.
22 Saleh, 'Relations between the Druze and the Jews between the two World Wars', p. 172; Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 326.
23 Report by Cohen on 'Visits to the Druze villages in the north', 20 October 1932, S25/6638, CZA.
24 These numbers are taken from Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestine–Arab National Movement, vol. ii, 1929–1939: from Riots to Rebellion*, p. 39.
25 See Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, pp. 328–9; Saleh, 'Relations between the Druze and the Jews between the two World Wars', p. 179; and Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestine-Arab National Movement, Vol. ii, 1929–1939: From Riots to Rebellion*, p. 271.
26 Rafik Halabi, *West Bank Story* (New York: 1982), p. 6. The family name Halabi features prominently on the list of Druze recruits to the Druze Unit (established by the IDF) in July 1948.
27 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 331; Saleh, 'Relations between the Jews and the Druze between the two World Wars', p. 171.
28 The quotations from Nahmani's circular are taken from Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 330. Koren has the full text of the circular: *Kesher Ne'eman*, pp. 31–3.
29 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 331.
30 According to Shakib Saleh this was the situation in the case of Najib Mansur and Hasan Hassun, the Mukhtars of Daliyat al-Karmal and 'Isfiya, who publicly supported the rebels because 'they feared for their official positions'; Saleh, 'Relations between the Jews and the Druze between the two World Wars', p. 174.
31 Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestine-Arab National Movement, vol. ii, 1929–1939: from Riots to Rebellion*, p. 241. 'Izz al-Din Qassam had been a prominent figure in the Muslim nationalist movement and had been killed in 1935 during a clash with the British police; by this time he had become (and today still serves as) a martyr for the Palestinian cause and his followers formed the 'Ikhwan al-Qassam' to carry on in his name. The members of the Ikhwan served the revolt as leaders and co-ordinators of rebel groups and Abu Durra was one of the most prominent amongst them.

32 Firro cites oral testimony from Druze elders in support of his assertion that approximately fifteen Druze from Mount Carmel joined Abu Durra's group: *A History of the Druzes*, p. 337.
33 Saleh, 'Relations between the Jews and the Druze between the two World Wars', p. 178.
34 Ibid.
35 Gelber, 'Antecedents of the Jewish–Druze alliance in Palestine', p. 354.
36 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 331.
37 According to Porath this was a decisive factor in his lack of support for the Palestinian rebels; Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestine-Arab National Movement, Vol. ii, 1929–1939: from Riots to Rebellion*, p. 272.
38 Saleh, 'Relations between the Jews and the Druze between the two World Wars', p. 174.
39 Ibid.
40 For an interesting history of the various transfer plans, see Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: the Concept of Transfer in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948* (Washington: 1992). Masalha does not mention the question of transferring the Druze population.
41 'The Fate of our Links with the Druze', 2 November 1937, S25/6638, CZA.
42 Ibid.
43 Firro somewhat decontextualizes this, fixing it firmly within the boundaries of Druze–Jewish relations; Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, pp. 337–49.
44 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 341.
45 Saleh, 'Relations between the Jews and the Druze between the two World Wars', p. 183. Gelber also says of the attack on 'Isfiya: 'This incident was utilized by the Jewish Agency to widen the gap between the Druze and the Arabs in Syria as well as in Palestine'; Gelber, 'Antecedents of the Jewish–Druze alliance in Palestine', p. 359.
46 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 343. This is al-'Aysami's speech to Sultan as reported back to the Jewish Agency by Abba Hushi.
47 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 342.
48 Gelber, 'Antecedents of the Jewish–Druze alliance in Palestine', pp. 357–9.
49 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 334.
50 Ibid. However, Firro's absolute yet unfootnoted certainty on the issue goes some way to undermine the plausibility of his argument.
51 Gelber, 'Antecedents of the Jewish–Druze alliance in Palestine', p. 358 and Black, *Zionism and the Arabs*, p. 344. For a description of the early contacts made between 'Abdallah and the Zionists, along with an account of 'Abdallah's involvement in the Peel Commission, see Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (Oxford: 1988), pp. 41–65.
52 Quoted in Black, *Zionism and the Arabs*, p. 357.
53 Undated, S25/6638, CZA.
54 See above, pp. 14–16.
55 Eliahu Epstein, 'The Druze people, Druze community in Palestine: traditional friendship to the Jews', pp. 162–7.

56 Gelber, 'Antecedents of the Jewish–Druze alliance in Palestine', p. 359.
57 Gelber, 'Antecedents of the Jewish–Druze alliance in Palestine', p. 363.
58 For more on the sulha see Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 346.
59 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 347. A few members of the delegation, including Zayd al-Atrash, did meet with Abba Hushi during their stay in Palestine and visited the Jewish settlement of Mishmar Ha'emek to see the 'wonders' of Jewish agricultural technology at work. Saleh, 'Relations between the Jews and the Druze between the two World Wars', p. 185.
60 Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, p. 347.
61 For more details on this period, see Gelber, 'Reshita shel habrit hayehudit hadruzit (1930–1948)'.
62 'A meeting with Asad Bek [sic] Kanj', 20 February 1940, S25/6638, CZA: 'We have met with him several times, but in our last meeting on 1 Feb 1940 he said: "No one represents me, I am the leader in my region . . . a friendship between us will be beneficial to both sides." He asked us to visit him, and we will be the first to strike a treaty in this part of the East.'
63 Gelber, 'Reshita shel habrit hayehudit hadruzit (1930–1948)', p. 168.
64 27 August 1940, S25/6638, CZA.
65 8 August 1940, S25/6638, CZA.
66 6 August 1940, S25/6638, CZA.
67 Benny Morris and Ian Black, *Israel's Secret Wars: the Untold History of Israeli Intelligence* (London: 1991), pp. 30–31.
68 Gelber, 'Reshita shel habrit hayehudit hadruzit (1930–1948)', p. 169.
69 The possible annexation of Jabal Druze to Trans-Jordan is a recurring theme of this period. It was often used as a threat by the Druze to bring the Syrian nationalist leadership into line. In 1943 'when the National Bloc government was formed by Shukri al-Quwatli, some Druze threatened to secede from Syria and join a union with Trans-Jordan because no Druze was appointed to the cabinet. Another instance of Druze opportunism occurred when Ha'il Bey al-Atrash threatened to declare the unification of Jabal Druze with Trans-Jordan because his candidate for *qadi* of the Druze community was about to be passed over in favour of another. His threat led to the swift appointment of his man'; Mary Wilson, *King Abdallah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge: 1987), n. 251.
70 Gelber, 'Reshita shel habrit hayehudit hadruzit (1930–1948)', p. 170.
71 21 February 1943, 1/5, AHA.
72 24 September 1942, S25/6638, CZA.
73 Most of this information is taken from Morris and Black, *Israel's Secret Wars*, pp. 6–28.
74 Gelber, 'Reshita shel habrit hayehudit hadruzit (1930–1948)', p. 175.
75 Hushi to Joseph, 6 February 1944, S25/6638, CZA. This letter was written in response to Joseph's request that Hushi report on his activities with the Druze: 2 February 1944, S25/6638, CZA.
76 'It seemed to them that the question of the Druze was one part of a larger issue relating to the relationship between the Yishuv and the mosaic of Syrian–Lebanese communities, and they were unhappy about putting the

job in the hands of someone who had no attachment to the other components of the whole'; Gelber, 'Reshita shel habrit hayehudit hadruzit (1930–1948)', p. 177.

77 Epstein to Joseph, 14 February 1944, S25/6638, CZA.

78 21 June 1944, S25/6638, CZA. This is a memo calling the meeting. In a later letter from Sasson to the National Fund on the question of al-'Aysami he says: 'As you know we contacted Yusuf 'A. with your consent and after long discussions with you on his function, on our relations with the Druze in general and on your share in the expenses': 17 June 1945, S25/6638, CZA.

79 No date, S25/6638, CZA. This is an unsigned, undated, hand-written report of the meeting that occurred on 23 July 1944. There is no indication on the document itself that it was written by someone representing the Settlement Department, although Gelber makes this assertion in his article (p. 177). I am assuming that he has information that I do not. Certainly the tone of the report supports his reading of the document, as the agricultural and geographical problems of the plan rather than its political consequences are the main topic.

80 4 August 1944, S25/6638, CZA. This is also unsigned, but typed. It states that Danin, Sasson and Lifshitz were the Jewish representatives and gives the date of the second meeting as 30 July 1944. It should be noted that although the other earlier report made by the Settlement Department (above) does not express any doubts about al-'Aysami directly it does mention his information on the agriculture of the region as being 'too insubstantial for working out any transfer plan'.

81 Sasson to management of the National Fund, 17 June 1945, S25/6638, CZA.

82 See above, p. 151, n. 10.

83 'A report on a visit to the Druze villages in Jabal Shuf, Lebanon, 25 October 1944, S25/6638, CZA.

84 See Kirsten Shulze, 'The Politics of Intervention: Israel and the Maronites, 1920–1984', DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1994.

85 2 March 1945, 189/105, HA. This report is entitled 'Rumours from Lebanon'. It seems to be a Shai report based on information from a Druze source. It reveals that 'the Jews in Palestine are involved in negotiations with the Lebanese Christians about the issue of uniting the two countries. They have a strong bloc of supporters, including MPs, ministers and the Foreign Minister himself (??!) [sic] . . . '.

86 Shim'oni to Joseph, 20 March 1946, S25/6638, CZA.

87 5 December 1946, 195/105, HA. There is one unsigned report in the Hagana Archive of a meeting of the 'Mutual Support Druze Association' in August 1946. Salih Khanayfis is listed as a member of the committee of the Association, and Tawfiq Bey Abu Hamdan, a Lebanese Druze who apparently served as a major in the Druze Legion (established by the British during the war), is listed as chair. The report states that he 'has connections with military intelligence': 18 August 1946, 195/105, HA.

88 On this see Joshua Landis, 'Nationalism and the Politics of *Za'ama*: the Collapse of Republican Syria, 1945–1949', PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1996.

89 29 April 1946, 5 December 1946 and 10 August 1947, 195/105, HA.
90 2 February 1947, 195/105, HA.
91 7 July 1947, 195/105, HA, containing a photocopy of the *Davar* article; and 16 July 1947, 195/105, HA.

2 The Druze and the Jews in the Civil War, November 1947–May 1948

1 The main secondary sources used in this chapter are: David Koren, *Kesher Ne'eman* [*Steadfast Alliance*] (Tel Aviv: 1991); Moshe Carmel *Ma'arachot Tzafan* [*Battles of the North*] (Ein Kharod: 1949); 'Arif al-'Arif, *al-Nakba* [*The Catastrophe*] (Beirut: 1952); Tzadok Eshel, *Hativat Carmeli Bemilhemet Ha'atzma'ut* [*The Carmel Brigade in the War of Independence*] (Tel Aviv: 1973). For a general overview of the civil war period, see Netanel Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword: Israel's War of Independence* (Jerusalem: 1968), pp. 10–154.
2 See Chapter 1.
3 After the invasion of the Arab armies on 15 May 1948, contacts between the Jews and the Druze in the western Galilee began to be established. This will be discussed in Chapter 4.
4 1 August 1948, 922/75/44, IDFA. This important document is a military intelligence report entitled 'The Druze in the fight for Israel – Top Secret'. It outlines the history of Jewish–Druze co-operation, which by August was fairly well established. Included in the report are several original documents which constitute a significant part of my primary source material.
5 See above, p. 29.
6 As Benny Morris and Ian Black put it in *Israel's Secret Wars*, 'The Druse fell into that category of non-Arabs or non-Muslim peoples and religious minorities to whom Ben Gurion and his advisors looked, both in the pre-State period and after independence in 1948, as natural allies of the 'minority' Jewish state in its confrontation with the surrounding Muslim Arab majority'; Morris and Black, *Israel's Secret Wars*, p. 77.
7 Netanial Lorch describes 'the entire month of December' as witnessing 'a process of segregation throughout the country. In many areas before the war Jews and Arabs lived and worked side by side. Now they became separated'; Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword*, p. 50.
8 21 December 1947, 195/105, HA.
9 23 December 1947, 195/105, HA.
10 9 January 1948, S/25/3999, CZA.
11 17 January 1948, S/25/3045, CZA.
12 25 December 1947, 195/105, HA.
13 15 January 1948, 195/105, HA.
14 16 January 1948, 195/105, HA.
15 19 January 1948, 195/105, HA.
16 The document is entitled 'Meeting with Shaykh Salih Akhnayfas [*sic*] from Shafa'amr'; as Akhnayfas is not an Arabic name I have assumed

from context that it is either a transliteration or typographical error for Khanayfis, and that the *alef* and the *khet* in Hebrew have been switched.

17 *She'efshar leta'er ka'emda netralit letovat hayehudim*.

18 The Shafa'amr proposal can be found in full in 23 January 1948, S25/6638, CZA.

19 16 February 1948, 195/105, HA; S25/6638, CZA.

20 16 February 1948, 195/105, HA.

21 According to Gelber he was active in this interim period running 'several errands for the IDF beyond enemy lines, including damaging bridges in the Golan Heights'. Gelber does not cite a source for this claim. Gelber, 'Druze and Jews in the War of 1948', p. 244.

22 16 January 1948, 195/105, HA.

23 13 January 1948, 195/105, HA.

24 Mordecai Shakhevitch, *Lefatai Mizrah u Balevav Pnima, Bayt Medalia ve Shakhevitch* [*Towards the East and Inside the Heart, the House of Medalia and Shakhevitch*] (Kiryat Bialek: 1992), pp. 127–51.

25 Interviews with Geura Zayd conducted in 1988 by David Koren and cited in *Kesher Ne'eman*, p. 52. According to Koren, Geura Zayd, with the blessing of Moshe Dayan, set up a small armed force in 'Isfiya which was given 35 rifles by the Hagana. This group was apparently instrumental in protecting the road between Haifa and Mount Carmel. Koren's book is very anecdotal and gives virtually no dates for the events it discusses.

26 20 February 1948 and 10 March 1948, 195/105, HA.

27 1 August 1948, 922/75/44, IDFA.

28 16 March 1948, 195/105, HA.

29 23 March 1948, 195/105, HA.

30 1 April 1948, 195/105, HA.

31 There is some ambiguity over the date of Shakib's arrival; other sources say 28 March. I chose the 30th as it is the date stated by Shakib Wahab himself in a report sent back to ALA headquarters in Damascus on 6 April 1948: 6 April 1948, 132/105, HA.

32 It is interesting to note that a later Hagana intelligence report, based on an agent's trip at the beginning of April to Nazareth, Shafa'amr and Acre, singles out the Khanayfis family as being amongst the most hospitable to Shakib Wahab and his men: 'The Druze invite Shakib's people to their homes and organize extravagant meals for them. Especially prominent is the family of Khanayfis': 15 April 1948, 195/105, HA. It has been established that at that time Shaykh Salih Khanayfis was working as an informer for Shai.

33 4 April 1948, 195/105, HA. It is not explicitly stated whether it was the Jews or the Druze who suggested bribing Shakib Wahab. I have assumed from context that the suggestion came from the Jewish side.

34 14 April 1948, 195/105, HA.

35 7 April 1948, 195/105, HA.

36 7 April 1948, 195/105, HA.

37 6 July 1948, 132/105, HA. Shakib Wahab's reports were captured by the Hagana later in the war, and are included in the Hagana archives in

Hebrew translation. A few of the original hand-written Arabic reports can be found in 1/57/118, IDFA.

38 8 April 1948, 132/105, HA; 922/75/44, IDFA.

39 6 April 1948, 922/75/44, IDFA. 'Banu Ma'ruf' is a term meaning, literally, 'sons of beneficence', and is often used to describe the Druze. It springs, apparently, from the Druze reputation for generosity (see Betts, *The Druze*, pp. 16, 50). What is interesting is that Qawuqji, in his (very selective) memoirs, mentions neither the Druze battalion nor its activities, nor even the battle of Ramat Yohanan. The part of his memoirs covering the civil-war period can be found in English translation in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1/4 (1972), pp. 27–59.

40 In an intelligence report written in May, Shakib Wahab stated to a Druze informer that he was forced to attack Ramat Yohanan. He allegedly showed the informer a memorandum, written and signed by Qawuqji, which demanded that he carry out hostile operations against Ramat Yohanan in order to prevent the Jews passing aid to the fighters in Mishmar Ha'emek: 132/105, HA.

41 Eshel, *Hativat Carmeli*, p. 108.

42 Carmel, *Ma'arachot Tzafon*, p. 63. For the graphic account of this battle by the sergeant of the first platoon to attempt to storm the Druze position, see Eshel, *Hativat Carmeli*, p. 111. According to this account Moshe Dayan's brother Zorik, commander of the first platoon, died in this initial attack while providing covering fire for his retreating platoon.

43 14 April 1948, 132/105, HA. Shakib's account of the battles for Ramat Yohanan is occasionally incoherent, and often in conflict with Jewish accounts. According to Eshel there were twelve Jewish and seven Druze dead in this battle.

44 This story is related by Isma'il Qabalan, a deputy company commander in the Druze battalion who later defected to the Hagana and remained in Israel after the war was over serving as an officer in the IDF. He was interviewed by Eshel and his account of the battles for Ramat Yohanan is included in Eshel, *Hativat Carmeli*, p. 113.

45 Carmel, *Ma'arachot Tzafon*, p. 64.

46 Interview with Isma'il Qabalan in Eshel, *Hativat Carmeli*, p. 122.

47 *Al-Nakba*, p. 224. It is important to remember that al-'Arif was writing in 1952. By then the agreements that had been made between the IDF and the Druze, as well as the defection of most of the officers of the Druze battalion over to the IDF *later in the war*, were amongst the host of rumours and suspicions circulating in the Palestinian community after the defeat.

48 922/25/1167, IDFA; Eshel, *Hativat Carmeli*, p. 116.

49 Carmel, *Ma'arachot Tzafon*, p. 65. The fact that the Druze charged with knives between their teeth is also mentioned in Eshel, *Hativat Carmeli*, p. 116.

50 Carmel, *Ma'arachot Tzafon*, p. 69. Moshe Carmel was the brigade commander in April and May 1948, and is recounting events from memory.

51 There are conflicting reports on the number of casualties. Approximate numbers are 25 Jewish soldiers killed, 42 wounded; 110 Druze killed, 100 wounded: 16–19 April 1948, 132/105, HA; 20 April 1948, 195/105, HA. Based on an interview conducted with ‘Abd al-Latif al-Fahum (whom he describes as ‘one of the leaders of the fighters in that region’), ‘Arif al-‘Arif claims that only 30 Druze were killed: *al-Nakba*, p. 225. Abu Salih states that ‘During the battle the Druze lost 100 dead and many wounded’ (*Tarikh al-Muwahhidin al-Duruz*, p. 374).

52 132/105, HA; 922/75/44, IDFA. These contain a report sent by Shakib Wahab to ALA headquarters in Damascus on 17 April. In the report he states that he does not know how many of these villagers were killed. The arrival of reinforcements from the village of Yarka is also mentioned in Eshel, *Hativat Carmeli*, p. 116. The Jewish forces at the front line were able to see these men arriving in buses. Isma‘il Qabalan mentions that the villagers were commanded by Shaykh Jabr Dahish Mu’addi. The same man had links with Salih Khanayfis and Mordecai Shakhevitch; Koren, *Kesher Ne’eman*, p. 52.

53 ‘Arif al-‘Arif asserts that a ‘significant section of the town of Shafa‘amr was not willing to fight’; al-‘Arif, *al-Nakba*, p. 225.

54 132/105, HA; 922/75/44, IDFA.

55 922/75/44, IDFA; cf. Koren, *Kesher Ne’eman*, p. 59. Koren’s account of the meeting is based on a 1988 interview with Geura Zayd.

56 Koren, *Kesher Ne’eman*, p. 60.

57 Moshe Dayan, *Story of My Life* (New York: 1976), p. 82.

58 Koren, *Kesher Ne’eman*, p. 60.

59 No date is given for this meeting either by Geura Zayd in his account as cited in Koren, or in the IDF account.

60 According to Koren, Yigal Yadin was concerned about the motives of the Druze in suggesting this merger, particularly in light of the fact that the Druze battalion outnumbered the Jewish forces that were on the firing line; Koren, *Kesher Ne’eman*, p. 60.

61 922/75/44, IDFA. According to the report these actions were never carried out because the battalion later retreated to Malkiyya, on the Lebanese border. However there were further reports (which will be discussed later) of mass desertions from the battalion.

62 13 May 1948, 132/105, HA. This report states that several men deserted from the battalion on 26 April 1948.

63 Haifa fell to the Hagana on 22 April 1948.

64 This probably refers to the rumours then circulating about the negotiations between the Druze officers and the Jews.

65 7 May 1948, 922/75/44, IDFA.

66 1 August 1948, 922/75/44, IDFA; also see Koren, *Kesher Ne’eman*, p. 61.

67 Koren, *Kesher Ne’eman*, p. 61. Koren’s account is based on an interview with Josh Palmon in January 1988.

68 This episode is based on an interview with Geura Zayd; Koren, *Kesher Ne’eman*, p. 61.

69 Based on Koren’s interview with Palmon; Koren, *Kesher Ne’eman*, p. 61.

70 922/75/44, IDFA.
71 922/75/44, IDFA.

3 A Strengthening of Ties, May–September 1948

1 11 May 1948, 132/105, HA. Some of this information comes from a report made by a Druze soldier taken prisoner by the Hagana. The circumstances under which the report was made are not clear. The report is simply entitled 'Concerning the events in Shafa'amr as reported by a prisoner'; the prisoner's name is given as Musa Ahmad al-Atrash. His report ends with the statement: 'The people of the village want peace with the Jews and want to get rid of the strangers who brought this disaster upon them.'
2 11 May 1948, 132/105, HA.
3 29 May 1948, 195/105, HA.
4 20 June 1948, 195/105, HA.
5 Some Hagana reports say that the 'gang' (*knufiya*) claimed to have over 300 men in its ranks but Hagana estimates put it at 100–150 men: 25 May 1948, 252/105, HA.
6 30 May 1948, 252/105, HA.
7 23 May 1948, 252/105, HA.
8 26 May 1948, 252/105, HA.
9 Ben Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance: an Autobiography by Ben Dunkelman* (New York: 1976), pp. 242–55, and Shakhevitch, *Lefatai Mizrah u Balevav Pnima, Bayt Medalia ve Shakhevitch*, pp. 280–95. Shakhevitch's dates for the battle of Shafa'amr are wrong. He states that it took place in March, whereas numerous other sources state it took place on 14 July. Shakhevitch's unreliability in this respect is an indication that his account should be treated with some caution. I have also used Koren, *Kesher Ne'eman*, pp. 64–5, and Carmel, *Ma'arachot Hatzafon*, pp. 199–201.
10 He says that 'the knower will know and the understander will understand'; Shakhevitch, *Lefatai Mizrah u Balevav Pnima, Bayt Medalia ve Shakhevitch*, p. 280.
11 Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, p. 247.
12 Shakhevitch, *Lefatai Mizrah u Balevav Pnima, Bayt Medalia ve Shakhevitch*, p. 279. Dunkelman describes him as a 'representative of the Jewish Agency' (Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, p. 250).
13 Shakhevitch, *Lefatai Mizrah u Balevav Pnima, Bayt Medalia ve Shakhevitch*, p. 280.
14 Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, p. 251.
15 Shakhevitch, *Lefatai Mizrah u Balevav Pnima, Bayt Medalia ve Shakhevitch*, p. 281.
16 Ibid.
17 Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, p. 252.
18 Ibid., p. 253.
19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., p. 254. It is interesting to note that Dunkelman was put on the spot by this question. He did not want to reveal to the Druze that the Jewish forces did not have the capability to occupy all the Druze villages at the time (in fact he was afraid that the question was being posed duplicitously in order to find out how strong the Jewish side was). He saw his answer as being a way out of this dilemma.
21 Ibid., p. 255.
22 Shakhevitch, *Lefatai Mizrah u Balevav Pnima, Bayt Medalia ve Shakhevitch*, p. 282.
23 Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, p. 261.
24 Shakhevitch, *Lefatai Mizrah u Balevav Pnima, Bayt Medalia ve Shakhevitch*, p. 284.
25 13 September 1948, 2565/8, FM:ISA.
26 Itzhak Avira to Ezra Danin, 29 July 1948, 2570/11, FM:ISA; Ezra Danin to Itzhak Avira, 16 August 1948, 2570/11, FM:ISA. Avira, from Kibbutz Ashdot Yaacov in the Jordan Valley, was a member of Hashomer Hatzair kibbutzim which often registered protests against the destruction of Arab villages. In the same letter he voiced complaints about the treatment of Arabs in general during the course of the war.
27 '*Emda netralit letovat hayehudim*'; see above, p. 60.
28 There was already recruitment of Druze from 'Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmal into the Israeli army. This recruitment and the formal establishment of a Druze unit in the Israeli army will be covered in the next chapter.
29 29 June 1948, 195/105, HA.
30 19 August 1948, 2289/50–3339, IDFA. This document was a bad carbon copy of the original and is extremely blurred.
31 1 August 1948, 195/105, HA. The document is entitled 'Meeting with Shaykh Marzuq'.
32 19 August 1948, 2289/50–3339, IDFA.
33 29 August 1948, 2289/50/3339, IDFA. This is a letter written by Shakhevitch in English. It is in his handwriting. It is not clear why he wrote it in English.
34 Ibid.
35 3 August 1948, 2565/8, FM:ISA.
36 14 August 1948, 195/105, HA.
37 14 August 1948, 195/105, HA. I have no direct proof that this report was written by Haim Aurbah. It is an unsigned intelligence report beginning 'A notable reliable Druze informed us . . . '. But the decision to blow up Rasul's house could only have been taken by someone fairly high up in Military Intelligence. This is borne out by the fact that whoever wrote the report consulted with the commander of the Sidoni region and the commander of Hativa Shev'a before taking the decision to blow up the house: 'The commander of the Sidoni region and the commander of Hativa Shev'a agreed with me that Rasul Khatib's house should be destroyed immediately.' A further report (22 August 1948, 2–289/50–3339, IDFA) also confirms Rasul's meeting with the Druze in Yarka. It contains the additional information that he demanded that the Druze 'stop any work

in the fields that is done thanks to licences given to them by the Jews'. The question of the Druze's being allowed to harvest their crop that summer due to their co-operation with the Israelis will be covered later in the book.

38 2 August 1948, 2565/8, FM:ISA.

39 Ya'cov Shim'oni to Elias Sasson, 19 August 1948, 2570/11, FM:ISA.

40 15 September 1948, 2565/8, FM:ISA.

41 According to a report drafted by the 'Regional Military Intelligence Officer' (22 August 1948, 2–289/50–3339, IDFA – unnamed, but Aurbah could have been the author), 25 of Qawuqji's men were based in Yanuh at this time. The same report states that an unnamed Druze (his name is actually blanked out in the text, as is often the case in reports that found their way into the IDF Archive; but later documents show that it was almost certainly Jabar Dahash Mu'addi) suggested a plan to help the IDF conquer Yanuh. The plan was for this unnamed Druze to persuade the Mukhtar of Yanuh to surrender to the IDF in the event of an attack: 'His suggestion is [that] a unit of our soldiers shall leave from Yekhi'am with a Druze guide whom the Shaykh is willing to provide. The unit shall arrive some distance from Yanuh and open fire. The Druze residents of the village shall immediately leave it to a distance of 2 kilometres. (Blank) is convinced that the garrison will surrender after our forces approach and he would be in the village that night to transfer it to our control. He is ready to put the plan into action whenever we demand it of him.' The unnamed Druze went on to stress the importance of the Jews' conquering Yanuh: to protect Yekhi'am, to give them an advantage in conquering Tarshiha, and to help end Qawuqji's harassment of the surrounding Druze community.

42 15 September 1948, 2565/8, FM:ISA.

43 29 July 1948, 195/105, HA. Again, it is possible that the unnamed Druze informers were misrepresenting Sultan's position. There is nothing in the documentary material actually written by Sultan himself.

44 5 August 1948, 195/105, HA. Palmon described him as an 'honest and innocent person who is faithful to the Jews and sees his future and the future of his community in co-operation with the Jews'. This is from a long memo by Palmon entitled 'Our activities among the Druze (Top Secret)'.

45 Ya'cov Shim'oni to Elias Sasson, 19 August 1948, 2570/11, FM:ISA.

46 15 September 1948, 2565/8, FM:ISA. This report is entitled 'Operation with the Druze (Top Secret)', from the Middle East Department of the Foreign Ministry to the Foreign Minister. I am fairly confident that this report was written by Shim'oni himself. As well as bearing all the hallmarks of his style, Shim'oni refers to it as having been written by him in a letter that he wrote to Sasson a couple of days later.

47 15 September 1948, 2565/8, FM:ISA.

48 15 September 1948, 2565/8, FM:ISA.

49 Shim'oni to Sasson, 16 September 1948, 2570/11, FM:ISA. The 'other minorities in neighbouring countries' that Shim'oni refers to here are

almost certainly the Maronites in the Lebanon. The Israeli–Maronite relationship during the war is a fascinating topic which, unfortunately, is outside the scope of this book.

50 Shim'oni to Sasson, 16 September 1948, 2570/11, FM:ISA.

51 Avi Shlaim describes Sharett's policy thus: 'Although it could not be described as anti-interventionist it was much more cautious as far as the nature and scale of the proposed intervention was concerned; it was much more cognisant of the risks and pitfalls; and it was more realistic in its estimate of the potential pay-offs'; Avi Shlaim, 'Israeli intervention in internal Arab politics', unpublished typescript, p. 4.

52 26 July 1948, 195/105, HA.

53 1 October 1948, g/300/77, MAM:ISA.

54 2 July 1948, 195/105, HA.

55 Shim'oni to Sharett. 7 July 1948, 2565/8, FM:ISA.

56 29 July 1948, 195/105, HA.

57 See above, p. 39.

4 The Druze in the New State, July–October 1948

1 Some Christians and a few Muslims (particularly Beduins) do serve in the IDF but the numbers are negligible. Circassians serve in similar proportions to Druze, but because of the small size of their community and their relatively low profile in Israeli society they do not attract the same interest as the Druze, whose service in the army gives them a special status in Israeli society.

2 See above, p. 110–21.

3 5 August 1948, 195/105, HA. This document is a long report entitled 'Our activities amongst the Druze', and includes some information on the Druze unit; also see Shim'oni to Sasson, 19 August 1948, 2570/11, FM:ISA; August 1948, 2289/50–3339, IDFA. This last document is marked 'Top Secret' and entitled 'Unit of the Minorities'. Also see Koren, *Kesher Ne'eman*, p. 63; Saleh, *Toldot Hadruzim*, p. 215.

4 5 August 1948, 195/105, HA. There is also a list in the ISA of the original recruits from the two villages, entitled 'The names of the Druze recruits to the Israeli army and the number of family members who are supported by them': no date, 1318/20, MAM:ISA. There is one name from Shafa'amr on the list; the others are all from Daliya and 'Isfiya. There are 31 names with 238 supported family members in total.

5 Shim'oni to Sasson, 16 September 1948, 2570/11 and 3749/1, FM:ISA; Shim'oni to Sasson, 19 August 1948, 2570/11, FM:ISA. For Palmon's threatened resignation, see above, p. 90. The question of the Circassians and their recruitment into the IDF is an interesting topic that warrants further study. It should be remembered however that the Circassian community in Israel at the time was so small, that the recruitment, although in the same spirit, did not have the importance of the recruitment from the much larger Druze community.

6 August 1948, 2289/50–3339, IDFA.
7 This Top Secret memo (9 September 1948, 2565/8, FM:ISA) seems to have been written in deliberately oblique language and thus the exact circumstances of the possible recruitment are not clear; however it appears to have been connected to a planned IDF attack on Mishmar Hayarden, the only piece of Israeli territory captured by the Syrians in the war.
8 9 September 1948, 2565/8, FM:ISA.
9 25 July 1948, 195/105, HA; 19 August 1948, 1318/20, MAM:ISA.
10 Cited in Benny Morris, *1948 and After, Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford: 1990), p. 187.
11 22 July 1948, 1319/55, MAM:ISA.
12 23 July 1948, 1319/55, MAM:ISA; 20 August 1948, 1318/16, MAM:ISA; 30 July 1948, 1319/56, MAM:ISA.
13 30 August 1948, 1319/56, MAM:ISA.
14 1 September 1948, 309/59, MAM:ISA.
15 The Hebrew here is '*Menhalim "flirt" 'im 'eda zo*'.
16 Shakhevitch to Minister of the Minorities, 17 October 1948, MAM:ISA (number unknown). I am grateful to Kais Firro for passing this document on to me.
17 My sources for this battle are material from the IDF archive and the MAM files in the ISA; Eshel, *Hativat Carmeli*, pp. 281–2; Carmel, *Ma'arachot Tzafon*, pp. 270–71; Koren, *Kesher Ne'eman*, pp. 70–79; Raja Sa'id Faraj, *Duruz Filastin fi Fatrat al-Intidab al-Britani* [*The Druze of Palestine in the period of the British Mandate*] (Daliat al-Karmal, 1991) pp. 98–111. Faraj, who is from Yanuh, has recorded a very useful collection of conflicting eyewitness accounts of the battle.
18 Koren, *Kesher Ne'eman*, p. 64.
19 22 August 1948, 2289/50/3339, IDFA.
20 The Hebrew here actually reads 'Warka', a common mistransliteration for 'Yarka'.
21 Investigation Department to Yadin, 27 September 1948, 2384/50/10, IDFA.
22 Koren, *Kesher Ne'eman*, p. 71. Koren does point out, however, that this allegation has never been proven and might arise from the desire of an enemy of Mu'addi's within the Druze community to blacken his name: *Kesher Ne'eman*, p. 72.
23 Koren, *Kesher Ne'eman*, pp. 70–79. In his account Koren draws mainly from eyewitness accounts, many of them conflicting. For the interviews with the Druze residents of Yanuh, he used Raja Faraj (cited above, p. 164, n. 17) as the interviewer; cf. Carmel, *Ma'arachot Tzafon*, p. 270. Faraj in his own book cites various testimonies of Druze villagers to prove his overall position that the Druze of Yanuh were ignorant of any prior agreement.
24 Koren, *Kesher Ne'eman*, pp. 74–6.
25 Carmel, *Ma'arachot Tzafon*, pp. 270–71.
26 21 January 1949, 302/78, MAM:ISA.

27 Most of the information concerning the *sulha* is taken from Memet Razil and Avi Blair, *Minikrot Tzurim, Sipuro Hamufla Shel Ya'cov Barazani* [*From the Clefts of the Rocks, the Amazing Story of Ya'cov Barazani*] (Tel Aviv: 1979).
28 Moshe Yitah emerges from the documentary material (on many other issues besides this one) as a compassionate and fair-minded man who believed strongly in his job, and who had a particular interest in the welfare of the Druze. He was by no means typical of the bureaucrats dealing with similar issues at the time.
29 Yitah to Shitrit, 1 November 1948, 1318/20, MAM:ISA.
30 24 January 1949, 1318/20, MAM:ISA.
31 Memet Razil and Avi Blair, *Minikrot Tzurim,* p. 310.
32 Ibid., p. 312.
33 Ibid., p. 313. Interestingly, Barazani refused to meet with Jabr Mu'addi (Yarka) during the preparatory negotiations for the *sulha*. He considered Mu'addi to be too young and volatile to be a reliable representative of the needs of the community. He also believed that to negotiate with Mu'addi would be to usurp the power of the elders of the Druze villages whom he considered to be more level-headed and useful as allies in the negotiations.
34 The actual amount of the fine that was levied is not clear. The sources are contradictory over this. Razil and Blair claim that Barazani was persuaded to bring the fine down from 10 000 IL to 4000 IL (p. 316) due to the fact that Yanuh and Jath were not rich villages. An MAM document cites the fine levied on Jath as a whole to be 1000 IL: 14 November 1948, 1321/2, MAM:ISA.
35 Memet Razil and Avi Blair, *Minikrot Tzurim,* p. 315.
36 14 November 1948, 1321/2, MAM:ISA.
37 26 November 1949, 1321/2, MAM:ISA.
38 Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge: 1987), p. 225.
39 Ibid., pp. 227–9.
40 Morris's description of events in al-Rama is made in the context of IDF policy towards the Christians, not the Druze. His information derives from an eyewitness account cited by Nafez Nazzal in his *The Palestinian Exodus from the Galilee, 1948* (Beirut: 1978), pp. 32–3. I have taken my information on al-Rama from the same source.
41 Morris, p. 199.
42 On the nineteenth-century history of 'Amqa see Salman Falah, 'A History of the Druze Settlements in Palestine during the Ottoman Period' in Moshe Ma'oz (ed.), *Studies on Ottoman Palestine during the Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem: 1975), pp. 44–5.

Epilogue: The Druze and the State in the Immediate Aftermath of the War, November 1948–July 1949

1 There were also two demilitarized zones, one on the Israeli–Syrian border and the other around the town of al-Auja on the Israeli–Egyptian border.

2 Most of the information on the expulsions in the wake of Hiram comes from Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*, pp. 238–51. The Christians villages concerned were Iqrit, Bir'im and al-Mansura.
3 Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*, p. 251.
4 20 December 1948, 307/24, MAM:ISA.
5 Shitrit to Minister of Defence [Ben Gurion] and Foreign Minister [Moshe Sharett], 30 November 1948, 302/73, MAM:ISA. This is a long report entitled 'Visit to the north'.
6 Shitrit to Minister of Defence and Foreign Minister, 30 November 1948, 3027/73, MAM:ISA.
7 Shitrit to Minister of Defence and Foreign Minister, 30 November 1948, 3027/73, MAM:ISA.
8 Shitrit to Minister of Defence and Foreign Minister, 30 November 1948, 3027/73, MAM:ISA. The dispute over the site's listing goes back to the early 1930s, and its custodianship also played a role in the feud between the Khayr and Tarif families.
9 Yitah to Minister of Minorities, 24 November 1948, 1319/55, MAM:ISA.
10 Yitah to Makhnes, 9 November 1948, 1319/55, MAM:ISA; Makhnes to Yitah, 22 November 1948, 1319/55, MAM:ISA.
11 Shim'oni to Sasson, 12 November 1948, 3749/1, FM:ISA. Later reports indicate that some Druze were allowed to keep their weapons.
12 16 November 1948, 302/85, MAM:ISA. The Druze's letter to Ben Gurion was written in Arabic and had an English translation attached. The English in the translation is of poor quality and does not contain much of the detail about pay and so on, that is present in the Arabic. The signers contain many familiar family names: 'Abdallah Mansur, 'Adil Abu Rukn, Salih Abu Rukn, 'Abdallah Wahab, Salman Sharuf, Jamil Sharuf, Najib Abu Rukn, Salih Bat, Jad'an Mansur, Murad Hasan Murad, Muhammad Murad and Najah Asmar Sharuf.
13 For the memos from Ben Gurion's secretary and the MAM, see 25 November 1948, 302/85, MAM:ISA; 20 December 1948, 302/85, MAM:ISA. For information about the parade, cf. 22 April 1949, 2565/8, FM:ISA.
14 27 April 1949, 1318/20, MAM:ISA. A similar letter was also issued to his relative Muhammad 'Amasha who had joined the army at roughly the same time.
15 25 May 1949 and 28 April 1949, 1318/20, MAM:ISA. This document is a letter from Geura Zayd to the district police commander in the Haifa area asking that he employ discharged Druze soldiers in the police, and a list of potential Druze recruits to the police with personal recommendations by Geura Zayd; see also Zayd to 'The Department of the Rehabilitation of Discharged Soldiers', 27 April 1949, 1318/20, MAM:ISA.
16 17 December 1948, 302/67, MAM:ISA.
17 Shim'oni to Sasson, 12 November 1948, 3749/1, FM:ISA.
18 18 May 1949, 1321/27, MAM:ISA.
19 Cited in Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949–1956* (Oxford: 1994), p. 149.

20 18 May 1949, 1321/27, MAM:ISA.
21 For more on Safuriyya see Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*, p. 241.
22 Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*, pp. 237–42.
23 Yitah to Makhnes, 9 November 1948, 302/83, MAM:ISA.
24 Makhnes to Custodian of Abandoned Property, 19 November 1948, 302/83, MAM:ISA.
25 Yona Engel to Custodian of Abandoned Property in the northern region, 23 November 1948, 302/83, MAM:ISA.
26 28 March 1949 and 21 April 1949, 302/67, MAM:ISA.
27 No date, 302/74, MAM:ISA.
28 This area was given up to the Jordanians as a consequence of the signing of the armistice agreement with Jordan in April 1949. For more on the negotiations between the Israelis and the Jordanians over the fate of the Triangle see Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan*, pp. 406–11.
29 Refugees of Umm al-Zaynat to Yitah, 23 February 1949, 1319/38, MAM:ISA; Yitah to police headquarters in Haifa, 22 November 1948, 1319/54, MAM:ISA.
30 30 November 1948, 302/73, MAM:ISA.
31 23 February 1949, 1319/38, MAM:ISA.
32 8 August 1949 and 30 October 1949, 2565/8, FM:ISA. There was a file in the ISA concerning the Druze that was classified. Yehoshua Freundlich, the Chief Archivist, was able to tell me that the file concerned information on Druze prisoners in Syria but was unable to show me the file.
33 29 August 1949, 2565/8, FM:ISA.

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